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Samakom Khmer : the cross-cultural adaptation of a newcomer ethnic organization.

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SAMAKOM KHMER: THE CROSS-CULTURAL ADAPTATION OF A NEWCOMER ETHNIC ORGANIZATION

A Dissertation Presented

by

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ABSTRACT

SAMAKOM KHMER: THE CROSS-CULTURAL ADAPTATION OF A NEWCOMER ETHNIC ORGANIZATION

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The formation and development of newcomer ethnic organizations, particularly mutual assistance associations (MAAs), result from specific social forces and interactions unique to the refugee and immigrant communities they represent and serve. As such, they reflect and become part of a newcomer community's culture and ethnic identity. As bicultural organizations, MAAs have unique roles as vital links between ethnic and mainstream communities.

However, MAAs struggle to adjust to dominant models of organizations, an adjustment needed to function effectively in American society. Their problems result partially from their own process of cross-cultural adaptation as they learn to govern themselves, adjust to new roles, and adapt to differing values and norms. Conforming to the dominant standard of formal organizations creates conflicts among indigenous organizational members.

This study examines various dimensions of cross-cultural adaptation during the formation and development of a Cambodian MAA. Based on the **Samakom Khmer** (SK) organization, the research explores cross-cultural issues experienced by SK's ethnic board and staff as they contend with conflicting Cambodian and American cultures. Participant observation, in-depth interviewing, and document analysis are the primary methods used for an "insider's", Cambodian's view of social reality.

Several findings emerge which underscore this social phenomenon's complexity and uniqueness and its significance for the field of organizational studies. Culture and acculturation are vital and interrelated concepts in understanding SK's dynamics and behavior. The process of acculturation implies cross-cultural transitions occurring at individual, group, and organizational levels. Conflicting ethnocentric traditions and dominant norms caused SK to respond to issues of cultural convergence or divergence, acceptance of or resistance to cultural change. Consequently, members underwent processes of cross-cultural adaptation, including interpreting new symbols; understanding and making new roles; negotiating and restructuring social relations; maintaining and reshaping ethnic identity; creating images; and establishing and defining relations. The adaptive mechanisms of creating, rejecting, blending, and synthesizing elements of old and new cultures influenced the organization's structures and

processes. Gleaned from SK's experience, it is critical to recognize that MAAs are cross-culturally embedded in the larger context of its sociocultural environment.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the large-scale exodus of refugees and immigrants from Southeast Asia nearly two decades ago, the ethnic landscape of the United States has changed dramatically. Cambodians, Vietnamese, Laotians, and Hmong often identified as Indochinese are becoming part of the national ethnic mosaic. Increasingly, they are included as Asian-Americans and have joined the status of other people of color who are economically and racially disadvantaged in this society. Concurrent with their resettlement has been the emergence of immigrant and refugee organizations formed for and by these diverse groups of "newcomers" to American society.

Newcomer ethnic organizations, particularly mutual assistance associations (MAA), have become central to preserving cultural traditions, maintaining ethnic identity, developing self-reliance, and empowering refugees and immigrants. As such, they play a crucial part in the cross-cultural adaptation of these people. These organizations have also assisted government and voluntary agencies in addressing the newcomers' immediate needs as they adapt and adjust to their new homeland. Therefore, MAAs have a unique bicultural role in that they work in and bridge both the old and new cultures.

In order to be a strong catalyst in building the capability of newcomer communities, however, MAAs have to be viable and effective. Several studies reveal that most are experiencing difficulty in developing organizational capabilities, improving leadership skills, and building a financial base (Abhay, 1991; Marble, 1990; Smith, 1986). The problems encountered by MAAs result partially from their own cross-cultural adaptation as bicultural organizations. This process requires them to develop their own understanding of organizational governance, adjust to new roles, cope with cross-cultural conflicts, adapt to differing values and norms, and manage the changing cultural dynamics of their community. This study explores the cross-cultural dimension of MAA growth and development in terms of how these organizations operate and function in the American cultural system.

Problem Statement

MAAs are experiencing difficulty in adjusting to the dominant model of organizations, an adjustment needed if newcomer ethnic organizations are to function effectively in this country. MAAs are relatively new institutions for newcomer refugees and immigrants by which they experience and participate in American society. Indigenous leaders who usually run them are still trying to learn how to operate these western-type organizations. Abhay (1991) suggests

that the leadership in MAAs generally turns to familiar ways of governance reflecting their ethnic values and belief system. Consequently, traditional cultural structures and norms persist among these MAAs. These traditional patterns, however, are oftentimes contrary to the dominant norm of non-profit governance and operation.

Increasingly, funders such as government agencies and foundations require MAAs to conform to the dominant standards of performance. They are expected to function like other established community organizations. Yet, studies suggest that while in stages of development, MAAs have difficulty conforming to these standards (Abhay, 1991; Pho, 1988; Marble, 1990). Though they share common organizational issues and problems with other community organizations, they are still in their "formative" growth and evolution. In addition, in areas of their identity, governance, and operation, they must contend with the diametrically opposed priorities of maintaining traditional ways while assimilating dominant norms. These cross-cultural issues and conflicts need to be explored and resolved in order to facilitate the growth and development of MAAs. Exploring the process of cross-cultural adaptation of MAAs is a first step to understanding their organizational dynamics.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the cross-cultural elements in the formation and development of newcomer ethnic organizations. Based on a case study of a Cambodian MAA, this dissertation will focus on the organization's cross-cultural adaptation to a model of organization imposed by the dominant culture during its formation and early development. The research will identify those intercultural conflicts experienced by the ethnic board and staff as they contend with conflicting elements of two disparate cultures. Focusing on the cross-cultural aspects of the conflict will provide a better understanding of organizational issues that impede MAA growth.

The following research questions provide a framework for the study:

1. What theories of cross-cultural adaptation and organizational study, if any, inform the cross-cultural adaptation of newcomer ethnic organizations?

2. How do elements of traditional Khmer culture and the contemporary experience of Cambodian newcomers inform and affect organizational behavior?

3. What intercultural conflicts do organizational members experience in holding on to old traditions and in adapting to new ones as they form and develop their ethnic organization?

4. What are the specific needs and issues unique to newcomer ethnic organizations as a result of cross-cultural adaptation?

Background

Description of MAAs

MAAs are newcomer ethnic organizations which have a common bond and identity with the newcomer community they represent and serve. They share certain similarities with other newcomer and ethnic organizations because they are community-based, community-governed, ethnic, newcomer, and self-help organizations. Yet, they are unique because of their bicultural staff and the client community they represent and seek to serve. Briefly, we describe the general characteristics of MAAs.

Community-Based. MAAs are usually small, grassroots community organizations. They present an appropriate structure through which the ability of new ethnic groups can be strengthened to meet a variety of psychological, social, physical, and political needs. Central to meeting these needs is their potential for empowering newcomer groups to take collective action against problems within the community.

Self-Help. Like mutual aid societies of earlier immigrants, newcomer organizations also serve to bring newcomers together for self-help and mutual aid. Because they experience lack of support and discrimination in mainstream society, these new ethnic groups usually turn inward to their own cultural institutions for support. Therefore, MAAs play a vital role in building the capabilities of the ethnic community they serve.

Ethnic. Like other ethnic community-based organizations, MAAs have strong links to and continuity with the ethnic communities they serve. Though people from other ethnic cultures are employed, a majority of the board and staff are indigenous to the community. The formation and development of these organizations result from specific social forces and interactions unique to the community and reflect its language and culture. As such, they become part of the community's ethnic identity and heritage.

Newcomer. MAAs are recently created institutions representing new refugee and immigrant groups. They are usually governed by leaders from this newcomer community. They are also rooted in and have a common bond with this community. Because of this, MAAs are trusted by and accessible to their respective newcomer ethnic populations.

MAAs exist so long as their mission, governance, and membership represent newcomer groups who are still adapting to their new cultural environment.

Bicultural. MAAs are a vital link between their community and the services provided by mainstream agencies. By having bicultural, bilingual people, they become "gatekeepers" between the minority and majority cultures, translating differences in language, cultural norms, and traditions. As bicultural organizations, they have a foothold in both the ethnic and adopted cultures. They are, therefore, ideally situated to mediate between mainstream institutions and the newcomer ethnic populations.

Cross-Cultural Adaptation of MAAs

The acculturation of refugees and immigrants generally defines a fundamental process of culture change involving their adjustment and adaptation to the cultural norms, values, and institutions of a new dominant cultural system. As they become more exposed to this system, increasing acculturation occurs. This cross-cultural adaptation, however, requires them to learn new symbols, cues, customs, and traditions, to adapt to different norms and values, and to cope with new systems and structures. This process intensifies when they are placed in situations of extreme cultural conflict, such as, when they create and develop an

unfamiliar form of institution. Consequently, individual leaders and members experience a similar process of coping and adaptation to their own personal acculturation as they create and construct their own ethnic organizations in the context of the dominant culture. At the organizational level, a similar process of cross-cultural adaptation takes place as a result of the members' social interactions and the MAAs' interaction with its environment.

The cross-cultural adaptation of MAAs can be seen from two perspectives. One involves internal modification of values, norms, and behavior of the organization in response to how the members interpret and manipulate its structures and processes based on their ethnic cultural system, the "inside-out" view. The internal process is manifested at the individual, group, and organizational levels. The other includes external forces from mainstream society pushing the organization to conform to the norms and values of the dominant cultural system, the "outside-in" view. Because MAAs have a unique role and mission, they adapt by what Spindler (1977) contends as restructuring cultural arrangement, maintaining biculturalism, and synthesizing conflicting cultural elements while managing organizational ethnic identity. This study intends to explore these intricate and complex patterns of cross-cultural adaptation.

Significance of the Study

Refugee studies, particularly those concerning Southeast Asians, is a relatively new, fast-growing field. Thus far, data and literature have focused on the demographic characteristics, migration, living conditions, employment, and adjustment of these populations. The studies on adjustment include the individual or community relating to the physical environment, social interactions, and mental health (Cohon 1981; Aylesworth et al, 1978); the importance of the ethnic community in fostering the acculturation process (Bui, 1980; Okura, 1980; Nguyen et al 1980); and the role of the voluntary agencies and ethnic MAAs (Bui, 1980; Rose, 1986). In my extensive review of refugee literature, however, MAAs themselves have received little attention. This study will bring an added dimension to the literature of refugee studies by examining ethnic institutions within the refugee community as they go through a similar adjustment and adaptation process.

In the field of organization studies, the research will help link the concept of culture to the theory of organizations (Smircich, 1983). While this growing body of literature has focused on comparative management studies, corporate culture, and organizational symbolism, a new stream is emerging which this researcher identifies as ethnocultural organization studies. This new literature challenges the dominant eurocentric (western-based) model

and argues for a paradigm shift in organization studies. The impetus for this shift is coming mostly from people-of-color scholars in the United States (Calas, 1989; Abhay, 1991) and indigenous scholars from developing countries.

Similarly, the streams of organizational change practices emphasizing culture have followed the same dominant eurocentric course of cross-cultural management, managing diversity, intercultural training, and multicultural organizational development. The implications of this study suggest a direction toward an ethnocultural approach to organizational interventions: to acknowledge and value the cultural fabric of traditions, norms, and behavior which are unique to specific ethnic groups and to employ these dimensions to inform intervention strategies. There is a need to develop alternative, non-western intervention strategies for newcomer ethnic organizations which incorporate these critical aspects of the cultural traditions and institutions of new groups.

A more applied contribution of this research relates to MAA board and staff, as well as practitioners and consultants working with these organizations. This study will provide an example of how we can work together (process) to understand the cross-cultural issues (content) unique to MAAs to develop culturally-relevant and appropriate interventions (solutions).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Clarifications

This study will be undertaken with a set of ideological assumptions and certain limitations which will inform and shape the nature of the research.

Assumptions

1. The field of organizational studies is rooted in and reflects the dominant values, beliefs, and biases of western society. It can be argued that the profession of organizational studies lacks an appropriate sensitivity to and incorporation of non-western cultures, contributing, perhaps, to its characterization of being "culture-blind" and "culture-bound." Thus, certain oppressive assumptions permeate its theories and practices and need to be challenged.

2. Every ethnic group has a unique culture which influences their worldview and conditions their behavior. Their culture helps individuals make sense of their social and physical environment. Believing that no one culture is superior or inferior to another, only different and distinct, is a basic tenet for eliminating oppression and a step toward social equality and justice.

3. Empowerment implies the participation of people. This underscores the Freirian principle of "speaking in their own voices" and "acting in their own terms" (Freire,

1970). Using participatory processes are strategies toward democratization of organizations and liberation of disenfranchised groups.

Limitations

1. The study focuses on ethnic organizations with unique characteristics. Categorized as newcomer ethnic mutual assistance associations (MAAs), these organizations represent new immigrant and refugee groups from different parts of the world. While similarities and differences of these newcomer ethnic groups can be drawn from the study, the implications are limited to a specific ethnic group, Cambodians.

2. The findings of the study will be applicable only to a particular newcomer ethnic organization with its own unique history, member composition, and community setting. Because of the exploratory nature of the research, this study is limited in how it can be generalized to other Cambodian MAAs or any other newcomer ethnic organizations.

3. Since its inception, this researcher has been involved in the formation of the organization being examined here. In her capacity as an advisor, she recognizes that she helped to shape and direct the development of the organization. While the influence of her involvement will be documented, it will be impossible to fully separate and account for the researcher's bias.

Clarifications

Culture. The term culture is defined as a complex system which includes the knowledge, language, beliefs, traditions, customs, artifacts, and institutions created by people in a society and passed on to successive generations. It is a way of life, and gives people a sense of who they are and how they should behave.

Immigrant, Refugee, Newcomer. Immigrants voluntarily migrate from their country of birth to another country in search of better social and economic conditions. Refugees involuntarily migrate to another country seeking asylum because they are victims of war and political persecution in their own country. However, some hope to eventually return while others decide to settle permanently in their new adopted country. Recent refugees and immigrants are considered newcomers to the cultural, social, economic, and political fabric of American society.

Cross-Cultural Adaptation. This is a complex process by which one cultural group copes with, adjusts, and adapts to a new cultural system resulting in changes in its traditional cultural patterns. This process, however, can have a reciprocal effect on either or both cultures. Cross-cultural adaptation occurs from individual to societal levels. The term is broadly used here to accommodate a wide

interpretation of cultural change and process such as acculturation, assimilation, integration, and cultural pluralism.

Ethnic Culture, Traditional Culture. As a nation of immigrants, the United States (U.S.) is a multicultural society composed of ethnic groups with their own distinct cultures. Like previous newcomers before them, current immigrants and refugees bring with them their traditional culture to their adopted homeland. However, aspects of their traditional cultures transform into new forms and patterns during the process of cross-cultural adaptation. Consequently, their ethnic culture in this society, while similar to their traditional one, has assumed new characteristics.

People of Color, Ethnic Minority Group. These are a group of people who are treated differently and unequally, and who have become objects of discrimination by the majority of American society because of their physical and cultural characteristics. As a collective group, relatively few in numbers and with little social power, ethnic minorities or people of color are socially, economically, and politically oppressed. "People of color" is a term preferred by some within this group because it does not connote inferiority compared to "minority", and it denotes a common ideological meaning and image. Cambodians together

with other ethnic minority newcomers are categorized in this group.

Organization. A formal organization is distinct from social organizations such as groups, families, kinship relationships, and communities. An organization is a legal structure established for a specific purpose with a shared perspective and pattern of formal and informal social interaction (Kotter, 1976; Katz & Kahn, 1978). MAAs are one type of non-profit voluntary organizations which inherently imply membership participation.

Organization of the Study

The focus of this research is on the intercultural elements associated with the cross-cultural adaptation of newcomer ethnic organizations in American society. Using a case study approach, this dissertation examines the formation and development of a particular Cambodian MAA over two years. It draws from the experiences of individual members as a collective group and from the organization as a whole in how they contend with conflicting elements of the old and new cultures. Only a handful of previous refugee and immigrant studies examines the adjustment and adaptation of newcomer ethnic organizations. Thus, this cross-cultural study provides a better understanding of these unique organizations and its implications for appropriate

interventions which could be used to foster their growth and development.

The remaining parts of the dissertation are organized into six sections. Chapter 2 reviews related literature in various disciplines providing a context for the concepts of culture and cross-cultural adaptation. While theories linking organizational study and culture exist, this is not the case with organizational study and cross-cultural adaptation. Thus, theories of cross-cultural adaptation from other disciplines are examined to fill the vacuum in the field of organizational studies.

Chapter 3 describes the design and methodology of the research. The qualitative paradigm guides the methodological framework of the study. The use of ethnography, central to the qualitative approach, describes the meaning and reality of organizational life from the "insiders'" perspective.

Chapter 4 presents a contextual background of the key elements of traditional Khmer culture and of the particular Cambodian MAA in study. The historical immigration of Cambodians from refugee camps to a new homeland reveals a cultural group in transition. Background of the ethnic community and its MAA provides understanding of the object of study.

Chapter 5 presents the general findings of the study. The themes of cross-cultural adaptation are presented from the MAA members' worldview. Interpretation of these themes

is provided which focuses on conflicting elements of the old and new cultures.

Chapter 6 offers a synthesis of the findings in two parts. The first part is the selective synthesis of the cross-cultural processes from the members' perspective. An interpretation is also provided of this selective process. The second part is an overall framework from which to understand the cross-cultural of adaptation of newcomer ethnic organizations. Using a system's perspective, the framework addresses three dimensions: the degree of members' acculturation, the intercultural processes, and the sociocultural environment.

Chapter 7 draws conclusions and explores the implications gleaned from the study. Major points linking the concept of cross-cultural adaptation and organizational study are presented. Implications for research, practice, and policy are also discussed.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews literature which provides a conceptual and theoretical context for this study. Central to this exercise are the concepts of culture and cross-cultural adaptation. These concepts are particularly important because of the unique character of newcomer ethnic organizations, how culture mediates or conditions adaptation, and the lack of attention which organizational studies has devoted to the interface between organizations and external cultural systems. This suggests that the manner in which these concepts inform our understanding depends in part on insights provided from other disciplines, especially cultural anthropology and sociology. Several key questions can be posed which will help to focus this examination. How are the concepts of culture and cross-cultural adaptation treated in the literature on organizational studies? Is this attention adequate with respect to the type of organizations under investigation here? How can the articulation of these concepts help to inform this study on newcomer ethnic organizations?

We can begin by exploring the relationships between the concept of culture and organizational studies. This body of literature focuses on organizations having an internal cultural system, but does not explore organizations as part

of an external cultural system (Smircich, 1983; Jelinek, Smircich, & Hirsch, 1983). Therefore, it is important to understand how the concept of culture is linked to organizational theory. In a related context, the process of cross-cultural adaptation as experienced by and affecting immigrants, refugees, and ethnic newcomer organizations has not been given considerable attention. Very few studies of these organizations exist in the literature (Abhay, 1991; Pho, 1988; Bui, 1980) and none explores the issue of cross-cultural adaptation. More general perspectives on this process at both a group and individual level will be introduced from the literature in anthropology and sociology. Particularly relevant are those materials concerned with acculturation, intergroup relations, and minority-majority relations. At the individual level, the fields of cross-cultural psychology and cross-cultural communications have explored the importance of psychological adjustment, intercultural communications, and cultural learning. Both the separate and aggregate insights provided by this literature will help to inform the central theme of this study: cross cultural adaptation of a newcomer ethnic organization.

Culture and Organizational Studies

What is culture? The meaning, as well as the central role of culture as the common theme within anthropology, has

been the subject of debate for several decades. The nature of this dialogue has been recently characterized by Yengoyan (1986) as suggesting the demise of the concept such that it is no longer either a point of departure or a point of convergence in the field. In part, this situation results from the fact that culture has been conceived of in a number of different but overlapping frameworks, each reflecting different modes of inquiry which evolved in anthropology. This critique is perhaps suggestive of the manner in which "culture" is used in the field of organization studies.

Evan (1973) provides a sample of definitions for the concept of culture:

> Culture means the whole complex of traditional behavior which has been developed by the human race and is successively learned by each generation. (Mead)
>
> Culture is the integral whole consisting of implements and consumers' goods, of constitutional charters for the various social groupings, of human ideas and crafts, beliefs and customs. (Malinowski)

Similarly, organizational theorists have no single accepted definition of organizational culture. A few of these are:

> ...the way we do things around here (Deal and Kennedy, 1982).
>
> ...the pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered, or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration (Schein, 1985).

> ...a set of symbols, ceremonies, and myths that communicate the underlying values and beliefs of that organization to its employees (Ouchi, 1981).

What do these definitions imply for organizational behavior? According to Smircich (1983) the link between the concept of culture and the concept of organization theory generates five themes in organization and management research: comparative management, corporate culture, organizational cognition, organizational symbolism, and unconscious processes. Smircich suggests that culture as currently used in organizational analysis can be applied as a dependent or independent variable or as a root metaphor for conceptualizing organization. The following is an explanation of Smircich's framework presented in Figure 1.

Comparative management studies examine the macro relationship between culture and organization structure (Cummings & Schmidt, 1972) and the micro similarities and differences in behavior and attitudes of managers from different cultures (Everett et al, 1982). Organizational or corporate culture research assumes that organizations produce their own internal sociocultural system (Tichy, 1982; Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Martin & Powers, 1983). Based on systems theory, it is concerned with cultural variables such as beliefs, values, norms, and rituals as a way to understand the organizational environment. Organizational cognition presents organizations as cultures with structures of knowledge and cognition (Ritti, 1982; Wacker, 1981). An

Concepts of Culture from Anthropology	Themes in Organization & Management Research	Concepts of Organization from Organization Theory
Culture is an instrument serving human biological and psychological needs. e.g. Malinowski's funtionalism	CROSS-CULTURAL OR COMPARATIVE MANAGEMENT	Organizations are social instruments for task accomplisments. e.g. classical management theory
Culture functions as an adaptive-regulatory mechanism. It unite individuals into social structures e.g. Radcliffe-Brown's structural-functionalism	CORPORATE CULTURE	Organizations are adaptive organisms existing by process of exchange with the environment. e.g. contingent theory
Culture is a system of shared cognitions. The human mind generates culture by means of a finite number of rules. e.g.Goodenough's ethnoscience	ORGANIZATIONAL COGNITION	Organizations are systems of knowledge. "Organization" rests in the network of subjective meanings that organization members share to varying degrees, and appear to function in a rule-like manner. e.g.cognition organization theory
Culture is a system of shared symbols and meanings. Symbolic action needs to be interpreted, read or deciphered in order to be understood. e.g. Geertz's symbolic anthropology	ORGANIZATIONAL SYMBOLISM	Organizations are patterns of symbolic discourse. "Organization" is maintained through symbolic modes such as language that facilitate shared meanings and shared realities. e.g.symbolic organization theory
Culture is a projection of mind's universal unconscious infrastructure. e.g. Levi-Strauss structuralism	UNCONSCIOUS PROCESSES AND ORGANIZATION	Organizational forms and practices are the manifestations of unconscious processes. e.g.transformational organizational theory

Source: Smircich, L. (1983) Concepts of culture and organizational analysis Administrative Science Quarterly, 28, 339-358.

Figure 1

Intersections of Culture Theory and Organizational Theory

underlying assumption is that thought and action are linked together. Organization symbolism views organizational members having a shared sense of collective meaning and symbols (Smircich & Morgan, 1982; Van Maanen, 1977). Analysis is focused on symbolic action resulting from common purpose and understanding. Finally, the research on unconsciousness processes and organization aims to "understand organizational practices in terms of the transformation of unconscious energy into a variety of forms" (Smircich, 1983:). This approach tends to examine the complexity of human nature and to integrate its conscious and unconscious processes (White, Jr. & McSwain, 1983; Turner, 1983).

There is a tendency in all of these themes to stress the internal cultural system of organizations. Jelinek, et al (1983) affirm that these research studies lack a broad, societal analysis exploring organizations in a larger environment. The limitation implies a need to explore research in some other directions, that is, to look to the external, societal, cultural context within which organizations are embedded.

A framework which includes this external dimension of organizations embedded in a cultural system is suggested in Figure 2. This framework helps us explore the relationships between culture, organization behavior, and organizational development. It emphasizes the streams of organizational

Organizational Behavior and Management	Organizational Development
Themes in Organization Studies	Streams of Organizational Change Practices
INTERNAL FOCUS: ORGANIZATIONS AS A CULTURAL SUBSYSTEM	
comparative management studies	cross-cultural management and training (Adler, 1985; Harris & Moran, 1991)
corporate culture	managing diversity multicultural organizational development (Halverson, 1986; Jackson & Holvino, 1986)
organizational cognition & symbolism	organizational culture (Schien, 1985)
unconscious processes and organization	organizational transformation (Perkins & Buckley, 1985; Harris, 1985)
EXTERNAL FOCUS: ORGANIZATIONS EMBEDDED IN A CULTURAL SYSTEM	
counter-culture, social change organizations	interracial coalitions; multicultural partnerships (Chesler, 1981; Hines, 1977; Brown, 1984)
ethnocultural studies	ethnocultural organizations (Abhay, 1991)

Figure 2

Corresponding Themes in Organizational Behavior/Management and Organizational Development Focused on "Culture"

change practices which correspond to Smircich's themes in organization research previously presented.

Internal Focus - Organizations as Cultural Subsystems:

1. Cross-Cultural Management and Training: The majority of research has been done with multinational organizations and provided a stream of OD practices in cross-cultural management and training (Adler, 1985; Harris & Moran, 1991).

2. Managing Diversity and Multicultural Organization Development: OD interventions focus on change efforts in the cultural subsystem of organizations but also move to a new direction of multicultural organizational development (Halverson, 1986; Jackson & Holvino, 1986).

3. Organizational Culture: The theme here is that organizational culture is both a powerful influence and one that can be managed or changed. This can be done by using the cultural values of organization, training in organizational culture, and changing cultural symbols (Schein, 1985).

4. Organizational Transformations: Interventions involve transformative and spiritual change of organizations from the unconsciousness to conscious state. Some techniques include visioning, changing myths and rituals, energizing, and reframing. (Perkins & Buckley, 1985; Harris, 1985).

External Focus - Organizations Embedded in a Cultural System

1. Interracial Coalitions; Multicultural Partnerships: Coalition-building is examined based on social oppression and with a focus on ideological and value issues. Ideological and cultural value negotiations are recommended interventions. (Chesler, 1981; Hines, 1977; Brown, 1984)

2. Ethnocultural Organizations: Organizations are seen as part of a group's ethnic identity and a symbol for ethnic solidarity. Ethnocentric rather than eurocentric strategies are seen as essential for ethnic groups' identity maintenance and cultural preservation (Abhay, 1991).

In summary, the links between the concept of culture and organizational studies have taken several forms. Smircich (1983) presented research themes in organizational analysis which focused only on the internal cultural system of organizations. The concept of culture is used in organizational research either as a variable in analyzing or as a root metaphor in conceptualizing organizations. Building on Smircich's framework, an alternative perspective was presented which included the external dimension of culture and the field of organizational development. Streams of organizational change practices were presented which corresponded to the themes of organization studies. While the organizational studies literature embraces the concept of culture, none includes that of cross-cultural adaptation. For this reason we need to look to other fields

of inquiry to explore cross-cultural adaptation and its implications for the study of ethnic newcomer organizations.

Cross-Cultural Adaptation: A Review of Literature

Using cross-cultural adaptation as a broad theme, we can now explore concepts and theories from various social and behavioral sciences relevant to this study. A vast amount of literature related to this concept has emerged over the years. Not all of this is appropriate or informative as it relates to the dynamics of cross-cultural adaptation of the type of groups considered in this study. Rather, we have selected literature from the fields of cultural anthropology and sociology which emphasize issues of societal and group level adaptation as contextual scales appropriate to this study. Some research in cross-cultural psychology and communications are also considered since they provide insights into this process at the individual level.

Cultural Anthropology: Concept and Process of Acculturation

The field of cultural anthropology is concerned with the general concept and nature of acculturation. To understand the phenomenon of acculturation, we start with the premise that a cultural system is in a continuous process of change. Its dynamic nature implies varying degrees of change in a culture over time. Change in a

cultural system results from innovation within the culture, modernization and urbanization, borrowing of ideas and objects from another culture, environmental alterations, and cultures in contact (Spindler, 1977). Because culture is in constant motion, change does not "represent a shift from static to an active state but rather a shift from one sort of change to another" (Social Science Research Council (SSRC), 1954:984). Anthropologists refer to this phenomenon as culture change.

There are many anthropological studies which examine cultures going through changes as a result of intercultural contact or acculturation. Treated as a group phenomenon, anthropologists refer to acculturation as culture change resulting from direct, continuous contact of two distinct and autonomous cultural groups (Spindler, 1977). Reciprocal changes take place and subsequent alterations of original patterns occur in one or both cultures. At a cultural group level, acculturation occurs during colonialism, immigration, military invasion, and foreign-aid expansion. Consequently, in addition to the culture of society in general, acculturation directly affects specific groups such as refugees, immigrants, and indigenous peoples. Born and raised in one culture, refugees and immigrants experience acculturation by their voluntary or involuntary decision to live in a different culture from their own. The nature and degree of their acculturation depends on how their own

original culture is disparate from the culture of the host country.

According to (Bochner, 1982), the more disparate and opposing the two cultural systems, the more refugees and immigrants experience greater intensity and frequency of intercultural conflicts. As newcomers to a culture, they find themselves required to cope with substantial life changes thereby modifying their customary life patterns. Coping strategies can vary from resistance to accommodation, acceptance, and adaptation to changes. The acculturation of newcomers involves a long-term process of cross-cultural adaptation.

The Social Science Research Council (SSRC, 1954) brought together prominent anthropologists for a research seminar in an attempt to synthesize theory and research in acculturation. The relevant outcomes from this seminar are summarized below:

1. Acculturation involves intercultural transmission. Cultural patterns and values being transmitted by the dominant culture are selectively screened by the receiving culture (ethnic culture). Some elements of the dominant culture are accepted and others rejected. In the process of transmittal, elements undergo transformation and may take different or new forms.

2. Acculturation is a creative process. Foreign cultural elements, once accepted, are usually incorporated into the autonomous cultural system. Reinterpretation and

reorganization of traditional patterns and structures occur. Thus, acculturation leads to creation of new patterns and, sometimes the enrichment of old patterns. An example of this creative process is the combining of indigenous folklores and adopted Christian beliefs in the colonized developing world.

3. Acculturation causes cultural disintegration. While seen as a creative process, acculturation, if forced by a dominant culture, can also have destructive consequences for a culture as an autonomous system. Forced acculturation, as in the case of colonialism and immigration, blocks creative mechanisms of an autonomous culture. The captive culture loses its ability to choose what to integrate and reject, its freedom to modify, and its flexibility to reinterprete and reassociate. Without these capabilities, a culture, disintegrates.

> These disintegrative tendencies develop in a system to the extent that its borrowed traits set up differentiating alternatives which demand partisan commitments by the society's members. In this way factional struggles, such as those between what are usually called "progressives" and "conservatives," develop. Contest for status and prerogatives are also common when cross-cultural influences are pronounced enough to unsettle traditional controls. Cleavages may take place along age, sex, or other social borders. Intergenerational conflicts are commonplace features of acculturation wherever cultures meet; they undermine immigrant family life in the United States, as they do in contact situations elsewhere in the world. In addition to divisions along pre-existing group or class lines there are many others which gerrymander an exposed population in accordance with individual preferences for or against introduced objects, procedures, and ideas (SSRC, 1954:986).

4. Acculturation may result in the affirmation of traditional culture. If the threat to a culture is less pervasive and overwhelming, a reactive adaptation is to withdraw by affirming and preserving traditional values.

5. Acculturation has pervasive and lasting outcomes. If neither isolation nor annihilation of a cultural system occurs, these outcomes can be progressive adjustment and stabilized pluralism. Progressive adjustment can lead to either cultural fusion or assimilation. In cultural fusion, the two contact cultures can develop into a third cultural system, possessing unique attributes from the original systems. Assimilation, on the other hand, is a complete absorption of one culture, usually subordinate, by another dominant culture.

Finally, the SSRC paper points out that if the cultures in contact fail to lose their individual autonomy, then acculturation produces a "relatively stabilized relationship between the two contact cultures" (SSRC, 1954:990). The coexistence between ethnic enclaves with the dominant host is an example of "stabilized pluralism". Often in this case, parallel ethnic institutions develop in each cultural system and remain in continuous contact to balance the interests of both systems.

Acculturation studies in cultural anthropology have focused primarily on the changes and persistence of traditional cultural structures and patterns. Research in migration studies notes the influence of national culture in

facilitating or hindering the acculturation of new immigrants (Snyder, 1976). Those interested in urban ethnic communities investigate the "ancestral cultures of ethnic groups and in the fate of these cultures in the process of acculturation" (Spiro, 1955:1240). The presence of kin, friends, and ethnic affiliates in the urban ethnic enclaves are widely seen to provide important factors that facilitate or hinder the acculturation of immigrants (Snyder, 1976). Indeed, the presence of an established nucleus of new immigrants within urban centers has been conclusively shown to be a major factor in the mobility and concentration of these populations within the U.S., a pattern especially true for the most recent wave of new Asian immigrants (Desbarats, 1987). These conditions provide important foundations for reinforcing the value and strength of traditional cultural practices, religions, and family ties.

Gleaned from a survey of acculturation studies of American ethnic groups conducted by anthropologists, Spiro (1955) suggests interrelated factors which influence cross-cultural adaptation of immigrants. He indicates salient factors such as social mobility, religion, and family as they relate to acculturation. These are some of his findings. First, social mobility threatens a cultural group's solidarity and cultural survival. Immigrants who are upwardly mobile are the most acculturated. Social mobility creates class stratification within the ethnic community, thereby causing intraethnic conflict. Second,

religion is more resistant to acculturation than ethnicity. The importance of religious values is stressed more by the upwardly mobile group. Third, the family can retard the process of acculturation. Immigrants who came as individuals become acculturated faster than those immigrants with families. Nonetheless, acculturation does alter the traditional family structure. Spiro's findings provide valuable insights into the changes and persistence of traditional cultural patterns.

At the time Spiro conducted his study, acculturation studies of American ethnic groups in the field of anthropology were extremely limited. In recent decades, numerous studies have emerged, some focused on the acculturation of ethnic groups of color. Spindler (1977) reveal case studies of African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Mexican-Americans, and Native-Americans resisting, rejecting, and accepting cultural changes in their process of acculturation. For example, some Native-Americans (Seminole, Blackfeet, and Menominee Indians) experiencing early struggles of colonialism were able to retain their ethnic identity, traditions, rituals, and tribal structures. Chinese-Americans influenced by the extended family traditions form family associations that strengthen kinship ties.

Why are these anthropological concepts important to the topic of this study? Cross-cultural adaptation of newcomer organizations implies culture and cultural change. The

concept of culture is the foundation that provides us with the basic understanding of cultural change in organizations. What are the traditional values and beliefs of the indigenous culture? How are they different or similar to the host culture? What conflicting elements of the two cultures emerge in the process of the newcomer organization's adaptation? Does the acculturation of Cambodians as a refugee and immigrant group inform their attitude and behavior in developing their organization? Responding to these questions means understanding the relationship between culture and acculturation related to organizational behavior in newcomer organizations.

In understanding the nature of acculturation, we also begin to understand cross-cultural adaptation of newcomer organizations as a process of cultural change. The universal pattern of acculturation applied in organizational context provides insights into how change uproots cultural structures, traditions, relationships, and institutions, and into how the breakdown of original culture causes intercultural conflicts in newcomer organizations. These conflicting forces and elements are issues that members of the ethnic organization have to contend with in developing their organization. At the same time, they are expected to address basic organizational issues of managing and directing a viable ethnic organization in the new culture. While the nature of acculturation is important among newcomer groups, it is equally important to examine the

social status and social consequences of intergroup relations as newcomer groups become ethnic members of a pluralistic society. Insights into these issues can be extracted from relevant work in cultural sociology.

Cultural Sociology: Intergroup and Majority-Minority Relations

While cultural anthropology focuses on change in the culture of newcomers as they adapt to their new environment, cultural sociology looks into issues of social stratification as newcomers become ethnic groups in the host society. The nature and pattern of cross-cultural adaptation are examined based on chronological studies of how issues change with time and how different newcomers integrate into the social, political, and economic hierarchy of society.

Newman (1973) contends that historically, American sociologists have employed the social doctrines of assimilation, amalgamation, and cultural pluralism as traditional social theories in a pluralistic society. These sociological theories are frequently used to explain majority-minority relationships in this country. In as much as these theories are important, we offer a brief explanation of each theory.

Assimilation assumes conformity of immigrant groups to the culture of the dominant group. The basic assumption is that immigrant groups will, over time, assimilate the life

patterns and traditions of the dominant group. Cole and Cole (1954) suggests the dominant, power-holding group in American society is the white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant. Thus, assimilation is synonymous to what he refers to as "Anglo-conformity". The central tenet in "Anglo-conformity", he concludes, is the superiority of the dominant "Aryan" and "Nordic" culture (northern and eastern Europe) over the inferior cultures of the second wave of immigrants (1860-1940) from eastern and southern Europe. According to Hill (1974), the Americanization movement during World War I depicts the fullest expression of Anglo-conformity to insure the assimilation of the immigrants and their children through education.

While assimilation or Anglo-conformity has been the most popular ideology in the American experience, the idea of amalgamation was offered as an alternative explanation by scholars of early immigration (Newman, 1973). Amalgamation refers to the blending of different cultures into a new culture. The basic concept, Newman contends, is that only the best cultural attributes and traits of each culture will selectively contribute to the new, distinct culture. However, amalgamation occurs only in unique circumstances such as intermarriages and only to some degree in a pluralistic society. The term "the melting pot", taken from a play by Israel Zangwill in 1919, is frequently used to express the same meaning (Meister, 1974). Meister asserts, however, that while Zangwill saw "the melting pot as

bringing about the amalgamation of cultures, most Americans saw the melting pot as stripping the immigrants of their customs and traditions and melting them into Anglo-Americans" (1974:39). Nevertheless, both theories of Anglo-conformity and the melting pot deprive the immigrant of his own cultural identity.

In the wake of the settlement movement, cultural pluralism emerged as an argument against Americanization of newcomers (Gordon, 1964). The settlement workers who were helping immigrants in their adjustment advocated preservation of the immigrants' cultural heritage and creation of their own ethnic institutions. The theory of cultural pluralism implies that, over time, different ethnic groups will peacefully coexist while maintaining their own unique culture and identity. While promulgated by settlement workers and liberal intellectuals in 1940s, the notion of cultural pluralism is based on Horace Kallen's essays in 1924. He postulates three key positions in his writings. First, an individual's ancestry is predetermined. Second, each ethnic culture has something valuable to contribute to American society. Third, all people are equal despite their differences. Kallen was impressed, Gordon states, with how various immigrant groups in America were able to preserve their language, religion, and cultural heritage despite the pressures of Americanization. Proponents of cultural pluralism prefer to use the word

"integration" to "assimilation" in reference to acculturation of immigrants (Gordon, 1961).

Over the years, the theories of assimilation (Anglo-conformity), amalgamation (melting pot), and cultural pluralism (ethnic mosaic) have been adopted and modified in sociological studies about the cross-cultural adaptation of immigrants in American society. However, the theories of assimilation and cultural pluralism were more frequently used in the study of immigrants as "ethnic groups" which preoccupied the attention of urban sociologists of the "Chicago School" (Omi & Winant, 1986). These urban studies revealed emerging new and different patterns of adaptation in relation to community, generation, religion, ethnicity, and race.

Berkson (1974), a Jewish immigrant like Kallen, espouses his "community theory". He believes Jewish immigrants, like other immigrants, should develop and maintain their cultural institutions within their community to assist them in overcoming the problems of acculturation. Cultural identity, he asserts, revolves around the ethnic community of the immigrants. Some studies of immigrant life and ethnic groups in urban communities revealed that immigrants had been marginalized and lived in isolated enclaves of their ethnic community. Others interpreted the formation of ethnic enclaves as a necessary protective haven where immigrants could seek refuge and protection from their hostile and unfamiliar environment.

Looking into several generations of immigrants, studies reveal differing and changing patterns of assimilation and cultural pluralism among and between generations. While some studies reveal second generations leaning toward assimilation, other findings show a first and third generation tendency toward cultural assimilation (Hansen, 1940; Child, 1943). Hansen's study in 1940, the Atlantic Migration, provides significant findings on this issue and Newman captures the essence of his study:

> Hansen's law stipulates that while assimilation characterizes the second generation, cultural pluralism is typical of the third generation. It is argued that after the second generation throws off its immigrant skin, the third generation suffers an identity crisis. .....accordingly, the third generation falls back upon the social identity of its grandfathers. Hansen's law, then, depicts a threefold pluralism-assimilation-pluralism sequence (1973:76).

Sociologists emphasize the important role of religion in explaining group differences as well as group identity. There are some who contend religion is a vehicle for maintaining a link to one's heritage (Kennedy, 1952; Herzberg, 1974). Thus, religious groups are ideological institutions where immigrants have a sense of belonging and identity. Others assert religion, just like ethnicity, creates ethnic enclaves and causes divisions along religious differences. Gordon (1961) contends, however, that a majority of mainstream white Americans have their primary relationship with the three broadly defined religions: Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish. Because the people of

color, he argues, are not welcome in these structures, they have to form their own religious institutions.

The continuing debate between assimilation and cultural pluralism has been used to explain majority-minority relationships. However, alternative views embodying ethnicity and race emerge as expansions of and departures from these traditional theories, especially relating to ethnic groups of color (Glazer & Moynihan, 1970; Gordon, 1964; Keil, 1974 ; Omi & Winant, 1986). With the advent of the civil rights movement, early ethnic-based interpretations were questioned by contemporary sociologists as to whether they apply to racial "minority" groups. They argue that the concept of ethnicity concentrated on the problems of acculturation based on the experience of early European immigrants. Is this "immigrant analogy" applicable to the experience of racial minorities?

Glazer and Moynihan (1970) in "Beyond the Melting Pot" identified the different ethnic groups in New York City as hyphenated-Americans. In this significant study, they claim that ethnic identity while connected with cultural heritage takes on a new social meaning which differs from the original identity. As hyphenated-Americans, immigrants of color gain new social identity, different from relatives in their homeland. Here Glazier and Moynihan also emphasize the emergence of racial "minorities" as political interest groups entering the political process and having their own political structures.

Another important study is Milton Gordon's "Assimilation in American Life" (1964). Gordon identifies several subprocesses of assimilation emphasizing prejudice and discrimination. The two most important subprocesses, however, are cultural and structural assimilation. Cultural or behavioral assimilation pertains to newcomers learning and adapting, to some degree, the codes, norms, and modes of the dominant culture. Structural assimilation, on the other hand, refers to how newcomers gain entrance and integrate into the dominant institutions of society. Most immigrants become acculturated, he argues, through cultural assimilation. Yet, the majority, especially the immigrants of color, do not assimilate into the Anglo-American structure because they are not welcomed into mainstream institutions. Gordon questions whether prejudice and discrimination can be eliminated in American society where structural assimilation, especially for immigrants of color, has not fully occurred.

While the theory of ethnicity dominated the interpretation of minority-majority relations, alternative perspectives based on class, nation, and race have emerged. Omi and Winant (1986), in offering a "racial formation" perspective, review the salient points of each perspective. An ethnicity-based viewpoint stresses the problems of group identity; the class-based position emphasizes the importance of resource inequality; the nation-based standpoint infers the utility of the colonialism analogy. However, they

criticize these perspectives as inadequate and limited because "all neglect the specificity of race as an autonomous field of social conflict, political organization, and cultural/ideological meaning" (Omi & Winant, 1986:52). Building on this critique, they offer the theory of race as an organizing principle for understanding the complex patterns of racial dynamics and conflicts of contemporary America.

In summary, sociological studies offer diverse, often conflicting, interpretations about the pattern and processes of immigrants' long-term adaptation in American society. The issues of race, ethnicity, and religion, among others, are used as explanations of the nature and dynamics of intergroup relations. Studies of urban ethnic communities reveal the marginal existence of some immigrants and the formation of ethnic enclaves. In short, history reveals that different immigrant groups chose different patterns of adaptation in becoming part of the ethnic landscape of America's pluralistic society.

How do these sociological theories and studies contribute to our understanding of the adaptation process of MAAs in American society? MAAs as ethnic "minority" organizations and Cambodians as a "people of color" group become part of America's social mosaic. MAAs' long-term adaptation process as newcomer ethnic organizations is embedded in the political, social, and economic system of the dominant culture. There are sociological implications

in how the organization and its members fit in the stratification scheme of our pluralistic society. The group level theories provide us with some understanding of MAAs from the perspective of intergroup and interorganizational relations.

MAAs like other organizations are part of a larger system. How they develop and survive will depend on their interaction with the sociocultural environment. How does the MAA relate to other organizations in the human service system? What role does it want to play representing its ethnic community? What image does it want to project both to the ethnic and dominant communities? How does it vie for resources in the non-profit world? Is maintaining ethnic traditions more important than assimilating dominant norms? Contending with these cross-cultural issues in the organization means dealing with internal and external forces. There are internal pressures from the organizational members and the ethnic community. External forces also influence the way in which the MAA will adapt to its environment. The social theories will illuminate our understanding of the patterns and processes of cross-cultural adaptation of MAAs as they become part of the social structure of the larger system. We have explored cross-cultural adaptation as a group level phenomenon; we now turn to the individuals' psychological acculturation.

Cross-Cultural Psychology: Psychocultural Adjustment of Newcomers

To begin with, the group level theories of acculturation have also been used and applied in analyzing the adaptation of immigrants on the individual level (Kim and Gudykunst, 1987). Cross-cultural psychology has focused on this level. While concerned with human behavior in different cultural contexts, it is also interested in the effects of acculturation on the individuals' well-being. Acculturation studies in cross-cultural psychology have increased our understanding of the newcomers' behavior and state of psychological health.

According to Berry, Kim, and Boski, acculturative stress are "reactions that can be theoretically or empirically linked to the acculturation process" (1987:74). Such stress, they note, can be negative as well as positive in an individual's psychological functioning. As newcomers cross-culturally adapt to their host country, they experience acculturative stress because of intercultural conflicts. These conflicts induce tension and anxiety in the group and in individuals. Berry and associates contend that a resolution of intercultural conflicts is inevitable when stress builds up into a crisis stage. Adaptation generally takes place in which conflict and crisis may or may not be resolved. Several studies provide different interpretations of an individual's cross-cultural adaptation (Taft, 1987; Berry et al, 1987; Furnham & Bochner, 1986).

Taft (1987) views five facets of an individual's adaptation consisting of adjustment, ethnic identity, cultural competence, social absorption, and role acculturation. These facets, he contends, can be looked at from the internal (self-assessment) and external (outsider's observation) viewpoints. In Taft's words, "internal adjustment is represented by expressed feelings of satisfaction, fulfillment, emotional comfort, and sense of well-being" (1987:155). External adjustment depends on how well immigrants' participate in economic and social life. The internal aspect of ethnic identity involves a sense of belonging to the immigrant's cultural group, sharing its status and destiny. The external side, on the other hand, involves the choice of citizenship and ascription of ethnicity by others.

As Taft further explains, cultural competence is the ability to acquire the necessary cultural skills such as language proficiency, employment capability, and ability to perform social roles. This degree of cultural competence can be perceived differently by the newcomers or by others. Social absorption can also be viewed two ways: how much do newcomers want to relate to the dominant group and how accepted are they by that group? Similarly, role acculturation refers to the newcomers' attitude toward acculturation as well as the adoption of the dominant culture's values and norms.

Two models are useful in understanding newcomers' cross-cultural adaptation on the individual level. Berry (1980) identifies four modes of acculturation by a newcomer: assimilation, separation, marginality, and integration. This model is based on the immigrant's attitude toward maintaining ethnic identity and mainstreaming into the host society. Another model by Furnham and Bochner (1986) offers a similar perspective on how individuals may psychologically respond to intercultural situations that could change their identity. They assert that an individual exposed to other cultural influences can resist or accept becoming multicultural. The four response styles are "passing", exaggerated chauvinism, the marginal syndrome, and the mediating person.

For Berry, assimilation means ethnic identity is relinquished by conforming to the mainstream culture. Furham and Bochner suggest the term "passing" for a similar response to change in one's ethnic identity by rejecting the old culture and replacing it with the new. As the extreme opposite to assimilation, Berry views separation as a "self-imposed withdrawal from the larger society", thereby traditional culture is maintained (Berry & Kim, 1988:212). This reaction is what Furnham and Bochner refer to as exaggerated chauvinism. Some individuals, they claim, become nationalistic and chauvinistic.

Derived from Stonequist's (1937) notion of "The Marginal Man", Berry views marginalization as occurring when

an immigrant does not feel in touch with both traditional and dominant cultures. This feeling of confusion and distress is accompanied with a sense of alienation and loss of identity. According to Furnham and Bochner the marginal syndrome is when individuals vacillate between their own culture and the new culture and do not feel a sense of belonging to either one.

Integration, Berry contends, is to maintain ethnic identity while at the same time becoming part of the larger society. Furnham and Bochner refer to these individuals as mediating persons because they seem able to synthesize different features of their cultural identities. Because they are able to bridge cultures, they can be bicultural or multicultural.

The term "culture shock" is a term used by anthropologist Kalervo Oberg (1960) to describe the experience of coping with the anxiety and stress of being in different culture. As he remarks:

> Culture shock is precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse. These signs or cues include the thousand and one ways in which we orient ourselves to the situations of daily life: when to shake hands and what to say when we meet people, when and how to give tips, how to give orders to servants, how to make purchases, when to accept and when not (1960:176).

According to Furnham and Bochner (1986), researchers since Oberg have used the notion of culture shock to reframe different problems, such as culture fatigue for physical

irritability (Guthrie, 1975); language shock for language difficulty (Smalley, 1963); and role shock for role ambiguity (Byrnes, 1966). Some psychological manifestations of culture shock include grief, negative life-events, value differences, and fragmented social support. These are only a few interpretations of the effects of migration on the well-being of newcomers. Their experience of culture shock only demonstrates the range and complexity of cross-cultural adaptation.

What models and concepts of psychological adaptation during acculturation would be informative and relevant to the study of an organization's cross-cultural adaptation? An MAA whose members are refugees and immigrants must deal with the individual members' acculturation and how they respond to intercultural situations. Their unique background, experience, and personality influence their transition to American culture. Individuals who experience acculturation have their own modes of adaptation in differing situations. Taken collectively, the degree of acculturation and the mode of adaptation of each member can influence interpersonal relations and group dynamics. Looking at the variation of acculturation is equally important as assuming the existence of diversity among members. Taken collectively, psychological acculturation of organizational members affects an MAA's cross-cultural adaptation process.

Cross-Cultural Communication: Cultural-Learning

Communication is at the core of every culture. It is the mechanism by which people exchange ideas, show emotions, transfer knowledge, and interact with each other. Every culture has a unique pattern of communication created through human interaction and manifested in various symbols and codes (Harris & Moran, 1991). Cross-cultural communication provides a framework of understanding the communication between people from different cultures. As a field of study, the primary focus is on the "cultural factors that impede communication among or between persons or groups of differing cultures" (Sarbaugh & Asuncion-Lande, 1983:46). Recent studies have also investigated the relationship between intercultural communication and acculturation of immigrants and refugees. However, a first step is to look at how communication patterns differ in cultures.

Hall (1976) offers a framework of distinguishing the communication system of differing cultures by using a continuum between high- and low-context cultures. He makes a important distinction on how "context" impacts communication:

> Any transaction can be characterized as high-, low-, or middle- context. HC (High-Context) transactions featured preprogrammed information that is in the receiver and in the setting, with only minimal information in the transmitted message. LC (Low-Context) transactions are the reverse. Most of the

> information must be in the transmitted message in order to make up for what is missing in the context (1976:101).

According to Hall, a culture may generally be situated in the continuum, but have variations existing within it. However, low-context cultures engage in elaborate explicit codes emphasizing open, straightforward communication mode. Cultures of America and Canada, oriented toward individualism and heterogeneity, are regarded as low-context cultures. The search for meaning and understanding in these cultures is manifested in the articulation of words. In contrast, high context cultures uses more "hidden" communication codes expressed in body language or non-verbal behavior implicit in the culture. For example, Japanese, Chinese, and Vietnamese cultures which value group orientation and demand homogeneity are considered high context cultures. Interpretations in these cultures are based more on shared meanings and tacit understanding of the culture.

Being in a new cultural environment, newcomers are "placed in unfamiliar situations interacting with new people and learning new behavioral norms" (Furnham and Bochner, 1986:201). They have to communicate by using unfamiliar signs and symbols and by observing and learning new social cues. According to Bochner (1982), most of the time newcomers learn the nuances of the new culture by simply observing and participating on a "trial and error" basis.

Research indicates, however, that familiarity, experience, and participation in the new culture facilitates cultural learning. Bochner (1981) suggests that "cultural mediators" from within or outside the ethnic community can sometimes assist newcomers in coping with and learning the unfamiliar culture. Nevertheless, learning a new culture is a painstakingly slow process.

According to Brislin (1981) and Taft (1987), cultural learning involves substantial changes and developments with respect to an individual's cognition, dynamic tendencies, and performance. Cognition refers to knowledge, understanding, and learning of the appropriate cultural behavior and skills in social interaction and discourse. Dynamic tendencies relates to the newcomer's attitudes toward adopting values, beliefs, norms, and practices of the new culture. Performance pertains to learning and using culturally-defined behavior, language, and social skills in the new culture. These, they contend, are interrelated psychological functions of an individual which could influence cultural learning.

Acquisition of the new culture's language, if different, is one of the key factors in the cross-cultural adaptation of immigrants and refugees. Gudykunst and Hammer (1987) indicate in a review of research studies that competence of the second language reduces the newcomer's uncertainty and anxiety. The more similar the newcomer and host cultures are, they contend, the easier it is for

newcomer to learn the language. Some research also show that competence in second language is indirectly related to the individual's acculturation. Motivation to acquire the language is influenced by many related factors such as the desire to participate in and integrate into the new culture (Kim, 1977). Competency of the host language also facilitates learning the unfamiliar culture of the adopted homeland.

Furnham and Bochner (1986) prefer the approach of social skills training because it has proven effective in increasing cultural learning and competence. This approach attributes lack of cultural knowledge to lack of appropriate skills in a new culture rather than to some deficiency in an individual's personality or cultural socialization. It also advocates for acquiring a second culture rather than abandoning a person's original culture. More importantly, social skills training has "very few ethnocentric overtones and fewer negative consequences [for the original culture] than other approaches" (Furnham and Bochner, 1986:243). They claim, however, that the technology of social skills training is primarily culture-bound. Nevertheless, it has the most potential of taking into account bicultural or multicultural approaches. They cite LaFromboise's and Rowe's (1983) model which shows that determining social competence can be seen from two worldviews and that developing bicultural competence can help coping in two cultures.

How can cross-cultural communication and learning inform organizational behavior in the adaptation process of newcomer organizations? Communication, a core element in every culture, is manifested in codes, symbols, meanings, and interaction. It is the essence of group behavior and the basis of interpersonal and intergroup relations. It is the most important mechanism an organization has for getting things done. As MAA members partake in the "sense-making" of their ethnic organization, individuals will adapt to new roles by learning a set of symbols and meanings of non-profit organizations. Acquiring this new knowledge is based on their understanding of these symbols and meanings in the new language and on how well they are able to communicate them among themselves and with others. Learning to communicate this information affects group and intergroup dynamics.

While the Cambodian culture imparts a collective worldview, individual MAA members have a unique perspective on reality and on their organization. Individual difference, even when members speak the same language, can change organizational symbols and meanings. Having a better insight into how members communicate their own worldview and how they learn new concepts and roles enhances our understanding of MAAs' cross-cultural adaptation. In turn, we learn about their coping strategies in adapting to an unfamiliar process of developing a mainstream model organization.

To summarize, this chapter has reviewed how culture, acculturation, and organization theory are relevant to the study of newcomer organizations. The field of organizational behavior and development was examined linking the concept of culture and organization theory. While studies focusing on this link exist in the literature, organizational studies in the context of acculturation and cross-cultural adaptation do not exist. This gap in the field was explored through other disciplines such as cultural anthropology, cultural sociology, cross-cultural psychology, and cross-cultural communication. Some key concepts and theories from these disciplines were examined as they inform this study.

Among the important intersections addressed were culture, acculturation, intergroup relations, and minority-majority relations at the societal and group level. The processes and patterns of acculturation, communication, and learning were also examined at the individual level. A central theme expressed is that group and individual differences in adaptation exist in response to acculturation. Furthermore, the interdisciplinary approach reflects the multi-dimensions of cross-cultural adaptation of newcomer organizations. The diversity of concepts and theories characterizes the complexity of the phenomenon. The integration of these approaches, studies, and theories will provide an appropriate conceptual background in the presentation, examination, and analysis of our study in the

remaining chapters. However, before moving into those sections, we briefly address the methodology of the study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

This study analyzes the formation and development of a newcomer ethnic organization by a Cambodian group adapting to a new and unfamiliar social situation. Understanding this social phenomenon requires one to examine and interpret their realities and situations from their worldview (Spradley, 1980). In doing so, this researcher chose a phenomenological approach which employs qualitative methods to conduct the research.

In this chapter, we begin by discussing the research context and framework in which this investigation was initiated. Then, we move to a discussion of the data collection methods, analysis, and the presentation of findings. Finally, we deal with some considerations and limitations related to the research methodology of the study.

Research Design: Context and Framework

The conduct of this research was based on a qualitative paradigm using inductive forms of inquiry and analysis. We provide a brief description of the context, purposes, and framework in which the study was explored.

Context of Investigation

This inquiry actually began two years ago when this researcher was approached by a group of Cambodians from the community to assist them in revitalizing their inactive MAA. Prior to that inquiry she had worked informally as an OD advisor with a larger and more established Cambodian MAA elsewhere in the state. Since then, she was involved with the local Cambodian MAA in an advisory capacity as part of her professional involvement in an ongoing "participatory action research" (PAR) project. The purpose of the PAR project was to assist in the formation and development of an inactive Cambodian MAA. The background and activities of the PAR project are elaborated in Chapter 5. In this chapter, we focus on the nature of the researcher's involvement with the organization and the implications of her involvement on the choice and design of the methodology for this study.

According to Rahman, the term PAR was coined by Orlando Fals Borda because it emphasizes the point that "action research that is participatory, and participatory research that unites with action" (1985:129). The principles underlying PAR formed the basic premise on which this exploratory investigation is based. Brown and Tandon (1983) assert that PAR values practical knowledge and developmental change. They also contend that it "produces mutual education, new education, and solutions for specific

problems" (1983:282). This type of inquiry stimulates people-centered initiatives resulting in self-reliant activities grounded in local needs. Consequently, PAR was the most effective method for addressing the issue of cultural relevancy and appropriateness especially when working with the Cambodian group.

Action research dominated the design because this particular study was based in an organizational setting. Participation of the organization's members was the "modus operandi". From the beginning, various participatory structures such as working groups and board committees were formed to encourage participation from the community and the board. For example, a working group composed of Cambodian students and board leaders directed a community assessment activity; and a committee composed of the MAA executive leaders assisted in the training of board members. Employing participatory processes was integral to the underlying goals of developing self-reliance and building leadership capability of the Cambodian community and organization.

While the focus of this study was conducted as part of the PAR project, it makes up only one aspect of the project. Some parts of the methodology such as in-depth interviews and data analysis did not include participation. Reasons for this are explained later in the section on considerations and limitations. The framework of the

methodology can be better understood by elaborating on the purposes of the study.

Purposes

The research study was undertaken with two purposes in mind, consistent with "the dual goals of action research of developing new knowledge and solving practical problems" (Ketterer, Price, & Politser, 1980:7). The first purpose was to assess the status and needs of the organization as perceived by its members (practical knowledge). The findings were also intended to be shared with the MAA board and staff so that they could be utilized in developing their board and organization. The second purpose was to gain insight into the unique cross-cultural characteristics of newcomer ethnic organizations (research knowledge). This type of organizational analysis is essential if we are to create innovative approaches specifically addressing the special needs of MAAs. While these purposes are interrelated, the second specifically addresses the focus of the dissertation. Nevertheless, both purposes aim to assist the organization's members in facilitating the growth and development of their ethnic MAA. It was in this context that the exploratory investigation of this newcomer ethnic organization was undertaken.

Research Framework

The methodological framework of this dissertation was based on the paradigm of qualitative research. The purpose of this phenomenological approach was to capture the worldview of a newcomer group as they experienced acculturation in a new sociocultural environment. If we are to grasp the meaning and reality of organizational life, we have to understand it from an "inside-view". Ethnography, describing systems of meaning expressed in language and behavior (Spradley, 1979), provides an epistomological basis for organizational analysis (Sanday, 1979). Spradley (1979) contends that the thrust of the technique is to learn from people rather than to study people. Ethnographic techniques of data collection provided a sense of the informants' world: what they think, how they feel, what they see, and how they act. Therefore, the use of ethnographic methods such as participant observation and in-depth interviews was central to the qualitative approach to this investigation. In addition, other sources such as written and video records were used to gather more information.

Research Methods: Data Collection and Analysis

Differing methods such as participant observation and in-depth interviewing were employed in collecting data. Identifying generative themes was the means by which the

data were analyzed in order to discover concepts and propositions.

Participant Observation

Sanday emphasizes the "importance of long residence and participant observation" (1979:19) in the ethnographic paradigm for organizational studies. Participant observation was therefore one of the core elements in the research design of the study. The nature and length of the researcher's involvement with the Cambodian MAA presented many occasions to participate in and observe what Spradley (1980) refers to as "social situations." According to Spradley, every social situation has three elements: "you will locate yourself in some place; you will watch actors of one sort or another and become involved with them; and you will observe and participate in activities" (1980:39). This researcher was present at community events and group meetings during the organizing and formation phases of the MAA. In these "social situations", this observer's role ranged from non-participation to active participation. These provided the opportunity to engage in informal, friendly conversations with informants, which were instrumental in learning and seeing more about social realities from their worldview.

Field notes were recorded after attending these "social situations" as well as after casual encounters with

informants. Occasionally, notes were taken unobtrusively while observing activities. In addition, a field journal on audiotapes recorded for subjective information, especially personal feelings and reactions of the researcher.

Participant observation together with informal conversations were essential in identifying critical incidents and issues about which the informants were preoccupied. These important issues gleaned from the ethnographic data provided the basis of inquiry for the in-depth interviews.

In-Depth Interviews

The method of in-depth interviewing was the basis for learning about the informants' "lives, experiences, or situations as expressed in their own words" (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984:77). These more formal interviews tried to capture who the organization's members were, what was happening in their community and organization, and how they felt about things in their organization. There were four parts to the interview. Initial discussion focused on their individual life histories, background, and experiences. This led to questions about the links between their organization and the larger community. The subsequent questions asked about their perception of and feelings about the issues in the organization. The last part pertained to cross-cultural issues, using critical incidents they

identified as a focal point in asking about these issues. An interview guide with open-ended and unstructured questions was used and included specific issues which served only as a reminder to probe into certain areas (see Appendix).

The informants, consisting of eleven board and two staff members, were the primary focus of the study. A committee composed of two board members and the executive director worked with me and facilitated certain aspects of the study. They were the key informants who provided cultural insights, relevancy, and appropriateness. They assisted in formulating and verifying the interview questions. Moreover, they were interviewed first to test the cultural applicability of asking specific types of questions. Because the researcher does not speak Khmer, the Cambodian language, they acted as interpreters. However, this was not needed often since the majority of the board, except for three members, were bilingual and had a good command of both English and Khmer.

All thirteen informants were interviewed frequently at different times and in different contexts. Seven of the thirteen informants were interviewed more than once. In addition, short interviews were held with the three executive leaders (executive director, board president, committee chair for board development) because they were key players in the organization and activities often revolved around them. These interviews asked more probing question

regarding their leadership role. These interviews were tape recorded only after the informants agreed to it.

Other Sources of Data

The PAR project also involved the collection of other sources of data in the form of written and video materials such as documents of the organization, video tapes of meetings and training sessions, and a report of the community assessment activity. The organization's records and board meetings' minutes were written in English; some were translated into Khmer. The community assessment report provided the demographic profile and the needs data of the Cambodian community. The report was the result of a year-long activity which involved local Cambodian university students and executive leaders of the MAA. As part of the PAR project, this activity became a vehicle in developing leadership skills for a group of emerging Cambodian leaders. The PAR project produced several video tapes of the community and group meetings as well as board training sessions. These tapes enhanced the data gleaned from participant observations.

Data Analysis and Presentation

The grounded theory approach, a method using analytical induction to develop concepts and propositions, provided the

underlying premise for processing the data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). From the stance of exploratory research, this researcher did not have a theoretical construct in mind. As Patton (1988) suggests, "the theory emerges from the data; it is not imposed on the data" (1988:278). Therefore, analyzing the data involved continuous and reiterative coding, interpretation, and ideation of the various data sources. Out of this process, emerging patterns and generative themes of cross-cultural adaptation were identified.

While all sources of data provided grounded information and orientation, direct quotes taken from in-interviews with the informants and participant observations were used to present the generative themes in Chapter 5. Taylor and Bogdan refers to qualitative methodology as "research that produces descriptive data: people's own written or spoken words and observable behavior" (1984:2). In this context, the spoken words of the informants are shown separately from the researcher's interpretation. Their words can "speak for themselves" in how the informants feel, think, and see. The interpretation suggests culturally-based inferences on their "spoken words and observable behavior" (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984:2).

Considerations and Limitations

In any research endeavor, it is imperative we pay attention to special considerations and limitations in the methodology based on the nature of the study. Cross-cultural considerations are highlighted on the issues of techniques, participation, and confidentiality. The researcher's lack of Khmer language competence and her advisory role are accounted for as methodological limitations.

Cross-Cultural Considerations

Sensitivity to Cambodian culture and appropriateness to Cambodian social situation were essential principles in the methodology design. Throughout the study, cross-cultural considerations guided the investigation and determined the techniques used, the nature of the informants' participation, and the confidentiality issue.

Techniques. Conventional and non-conventional techniques and methods were combined to conduct the study. Protocols were disregarded if they were inappropriate in the Cambodian culture. For example, developing personal rapport and trust with informants was far more important than the conventional protocol and techniques of interviewing which require an "objective distancing" between the interviewer

and the interviewee. Socializing became a ritual for developing a friendly, warm atmosphere for talking with informants. Thus, the in-depth interviews resembled informal conversation more than formal interview and were frequently conducted over lunch. This informal conversational context was more appropriate for exploring some topics, especially the informant's life history.

Participation. While PAR provided the overarching philosophy under which this study was conducted, participation in some phases was culturally inappropriate. The issue of trust and confidentiality was far more important than involving members of the organization in interviews and data analysis. Nevertheless, three interviews were conducted in the Khmer language and involved one informant as a bilingual translator. But, except for these, the researcher conducted all other dialogues and interviews in English.

Confidentiality. Extra precautions were taken to comply with the ethical principle of confidentiality and to protect the identity of the specific Cambodian community. Pseudonyms, therefore, are used in this dissertation to disguise the individuals, organization, community, and location. Besides, anonymity is what the Cambodian culture dictates and it was what this Cambodian community preferred.

Limitations of the Methodology

Khmer Language Competence. The use of bilingualism (Khmer and English) was the mode of communication in a majority of the MAA's activities. On occasions when Khmer was the only language used, a bilingual interpreter provided translation to English. Not having a command of the Khmer language by this researcher was a disadvantage and provided some limitations throughout the study. Spradley asserts that "language not only functions as a means of communication, it also functions to create and express a cultural reality (1979:20)." Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that some distortion of reality and perception could have occurred when the Khmer language was translated into English.

Perhaps, the researcher's ethnic identity and personal history of acculturation compensate for whatever loss in cultural insights due to her lack of language competence. Being of Filipino descent, having been raised in Southeast Asia and residing periodically in that cultural region, this researcher is familiar with similarities and differences in Southeast Asian cultures. Further, being a Filipino-American immigrant, she has personally experienced the issues and dilemmas of acculturation.

Advisory Role. The nature of the researcher's involvement can result in bias. As Rapoport asserts "over

involvement in the organization may result in bias: there are other forces than the methodological value of participant observation which press in-depth involvement " (1970:505). Consequently, awareness of the potential problems posed in having an insider's role had to be taken into account all the time. Doing self-reflection was a way to check the investigator's perspectives and assumptions. This was done by cross-checking the "observer's comments", especially personal feelings and reactions, recorded in the field journal. Constant awareness and self-reflection were maintained throughout the study in order to minimize researcher bias. In addition, the in-depth interviews with key informants provided the opportunity to gain deeper insights and probe into sensitive areas.

However, Taylor and Bogdan contend that "all researchers draw on their own theoretical assumptions and cultural knowledge to make sense out of their data" (1984:142). They further elaborate that "it is impossible to avoid one's own commitments and biases" (184:142). The two-part format in Chapter 5 (presentation of findings) was purposely done to separate interpretation and analysis from the "spoken words" of the informants. In doing so, it allows readers to draw their own inferences and conclusions.

In summary, this study was done as part of a PAR project. Qualitative research, however, was the overarching paradigm. While the study had dual objectives, the purpose here is to look into the cross-cultural issues experienced

by the MAA members. Participant observation and in-depth interviewing were the primary methods of data collection. The use of ethnography was the only way to have an "insider's" view of social reality from the Cambodian members' perspective. The notion of cultural sensitivity and appropriateness was a guiding principle in all phases of the investigation. Limitations to the methodology such as the investigator's bias and inability to use the Khmer language may have implications for the objectivity of the study. Nevertheless, self-reflection and constant awareness of these limitations were ways in which the researcher tried to lessen her subjectivity. Having presented an overview of the research design and methodology, we now proceed to the next chapter for a contextual background of the study.

CHAPTER 4

CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

This chapter provides a contextual background for the study. We begin by describing traditional elements of the Cambodian culture such as the values of deference, benevolence, and obligation, the avoidance of confrontation, the Buddhist religion, and the social hierarchy. These key aspects will be used to analyze the cultural nuances of the MAA's behavior. Next, we look at the transition of the Cambodian people who left the refugee camps to resettle in the United States. Then, we briefly describe the circumstances of the Cambodian community in Nuhome Valley which the MAA represents and of which it is a part. Since this Cambodian MAA is the focus of the study, we present the organization's history and activities, and the composition of its board and staff members. Finally, a brief explanation is offered a model of formal community organizations in the American context.

Cambodian Culture: Key Elements

Steinberg (1959), Ebihara (1968), and Chandler (1983) have written about both the richness of pre-revolutionary Cambodian culture and the diversity of its people. The overwhelming majority of the population were Khmer, the

indigenous people who speak the "Khmer" language and practice Theravada Buddhism. There was also an important, but numerically small, Chinese and Vietnamese population. Scattered groups of Cham-Malays and other indigenous tribal groups also lived in Cambodia. This diversity also existed in social class and background, especially between the western-oriented urban population and the more traditional rural villagers. The individual's social status and socialization of ethical and religious tenets also led to personal differences in lifestyles.

The present Cambodia and its national culture reflect this diversity but also possesses basic structures, values, traditions, and beliefs shared by the majority of the people. These dimensions of the Cambodian culture inform and influence organizational behavior. For the purpose of this study, we elaborate only on some of the core structures, values, and beliefs which provide a contextual background: the Buddhist religion, the social hierarchy, the values of deference, benevolence, and obligation, and the norm of avoiding confrontation.

The Buddhist Religion

Theravada Buddhism, the national religion of Cambodia, combines varying elements of animism and the ceremonial practice of Hinduism: it has been a cornerstone of early Khmer society since the 8th century (Steinberg, 1959;

Chandler, 1983). Buddhism is considered by Cambodians as both a religion and a way of living because it provides moral values, guidelines, and teachings which enable them to understand their environment, and to gain a sense of meaning through a larger worldview. The essential teaching of Buddhism is based on "four noble truths." First, suffering, impermanence, and change form the foundation of existence. Second, suffering comes from the desire to possess and dominate and from the ignorance of the true value of things. Third, quelling this desire will suppress suffering before entering the ultimate state of Nirvana. Fourth, reaching supreme Nirvana demands that the faithful Buddhist observe proper tenets and do good deeds in this imperfect world. Based on these beliefs, Cambodians accept current life situations, good or bad, as their fate but hope to achieve higher status in the next life.

A Buddhist believes that a person will be reincarnated and have a better existence in the next life if that person earns merit in this lifetime. Merit can be gained in many ways, such as becoming a monk or a novice; observing Buddhist precepts (avoid killing, stealing, immoral sexual conduct, and lying); observing religious holidays; participating in temple festivals; helping kinfolk; and contributing food, money, and labor to the temple.

The Buddhist temple was the "center of village life" in peace-time Cambodia (Ebihara, 1968). It served as a center for moral teaching, social interaction, and an educational

institution where the basic ethical and moral beliefs of Buddhism were taught and manifested through religious practices and ritual. Ceremonies and festivals held at the temple gave villagers a chance to socialize with other people while making merit through participating in religious festivals. While the temple provided schooling for monks and novices, it also served as a secular school if no official government school existed in a village.

Buddhism's moral teachings give Cambodians to have an understanding of the world around them. It provides the basic values and principles underlying their actions, and defines acceptable behavior. These teachings impart values of deference, benevolence, and a belief in peace and harmony which encourages avoidance of confrontation. Social hierarchy is also reflected in Buddhism's conventional social order and interaction with society.

Social Hierarchy

The structure of family relations provides a good example of traditional social hierarchy. In addition to providing a well-structured organization of authority, labor, and role divisions, the family is a complete personal and social support system. The closeness of family relations usually encompasses to three or four generations living under one roof - the extended family. Parents have the responsibility for and authority over their children

until they are married. The reciprocal nature of these relations is reflected in the responsibility and care provided by siblings to parents as they age. In addition, the children are expected to have a sense of duty, obligation, obedience and respect toward parents and elders. Similar family obligations and ties are extended to other members of the extended family. However, the nuclear (biological) family is the primary social unit toward which Cambodians direct their loyalties.

Similarly, a keen sense of social hierarchy pervades many other personal relationships in Cambodian society. The relationship between parent-child, elder-younger, man-woman, patron-client, teacher-pupil, and employer-employee are very well-defined in the context of this reciprocal social hierarchy. Older people are wise and always right. Younger people - considered immature - have to listen and follow their ideas. Men and teachers are accorded a superior status to women and pupils (monk-novice). For example, women traditionally are not heads of households, even after a husband's death. Instead, the oldest son becomes the head of the family. In this hierarchy, the rank of patrons and bosses are also higher than clients and workers. Patrons have control over their clients and can demand a sense of obligation from them. The superior-subordinate relations also dictate reciprocal duties and obligations.

Deference, Benevolence, and Obligation

In the social hierarchy, there are certain patterns of behavior required for both individuals in the superior-subordinate relationship. The subordinate must show honor, obedience, esteem, and respect to those above him or her in this structure. Conversely, the superior has both a formal and informal reciprocal duty, to show general interest in the well-being and future advancement of the subordinate by giving advice, providing moral and material support, and using personal status to access resources. The deference-benevolent exchange reflects this symbiotic relationship. For example, a boss offering praise and moral support to his workers may expect in return their loyalty and respect. Sometimes, just the mere presence of a superior gives status and prestige to the ones in lower positions. Having a monk's presence and blessing in events, for example, gives someone both social prestige and spiritual merit.

Social relations based on status, rank, and seniority also imply long-term, binding debts and obligations. Someone is obligated to return a favor given or benefit rendered. The receiver of the favor is constantly aware of this obligation, though fulfilling it will depend on the nature of the favor and one's ability to reciprocate. In some situations, the obligation is lifetime. For example, a child has a lifelong moral obligation to his or her parents for being born, provided and cared for. Cambodian parents

talk less of love and friendship. Instead, they will invoke this sense of obligation by reminding the children of their responsibilities, respect, and gratitude.

Avoidance of Confrontation

Cambodians are generally inclined to prevent and avoid conflict situations. They seldom show overt anger, displeasure, or criticism. The fear of "losing face" is one of the major reasons for avoidance of socially embarrassing confrontations. For example, Cambodians rarely tell someone of his or her mistakes or reprimand someone in public because it is insulting and the person will "lose face". Usually, it is done indirectly, either through another person or in private. In this way, the person "saves face".

The issue of conflict resolution provides a striking example of avoidance behavior. The obvious first stance is to avoid conflict situations altogether. Oftentimes insignificant conflicts are totally ignored so as not to disturb harmonious relations. However, conflicts sometimes do arise which demand a resolution. When conflicts occur, direct confrontation between the parties in conflict is avoided by seeking a middleman or "go-between". This person, usually a male, is a well-respected village elder, headman, or a monk. He arbitrates for both parties and seeks a satisfactory resolution.

This summary has noted some of the core values, beliefs, and structures of Cambodian culture and social relations. A predominantly agrarian society with low levels of urbanization, the culture was tended to be stable and immobile. Despite Cambodians more recent, somewhat superficial exposure to urbanization and other aspects of westernization, their core values and traditions, including the Khmer language, have not yet significantly absorbed Western modes, values, and patterns (Whitemore, 1979; Vuong, 1976; Rose, 1986). However, a small percent of the population has been influenced by French colonial contact and western education. This is the Cambodia that the refugees left, fleeing civil war and genocide. Having left their cultural environment, they were exposed to the modern western world. This brought dramatic cultural change for Cambodian refugees in transition.

Cambodians in Transition

Resettlement in the U.S.

Most of the Cambodians refugees, including many who resettled in refugee camps in Thailand and the Philippines were accustomed to living within the context of cultural traditions. One of the cornerstones of this tradition was the extended family which provided the social support system. The refugees were greatly distressed by the

disruption and separation of extended families. Many witnessed their immediate family in the "killing fields" of the Khmer Rouge; some left relatives behind in Cambodia; and others had seen their family groups separate and emigrate to different countries (Aames et al, 1977; Burton, 1983; Desbarats, 1987). Family reunion problems and the transitional life in the camps contributed greatly to their anguish and difficulty in adjusting to a new life.

Yet, despite these hardships the Cambodians were optimistic about their new life in the United States. A total of 849,462 refugees from Southeast Asia were resettled in the United States between 1975 and 1987 (U.S., 1987). Although the Vietnamese have remained the largest single component of this population, Cambodians, Hmong and Laotians have comprised a larger share of the total Indochinese refugee population admitted to this country since 1979. While earlier Vietnamese refugees were often familiar with the U.S., the majority of Cambodians including Laotians and Hmong were less familiar with western culture. Regardless of their background, few were prepared for life in the U.S. Although some adapted well, a majority still continue to struggle with this adjustment process.

Based on existing research, certain general patterns emerge in the variety of problems faced by the Cambodian population as they settle in their adopted country. According to Kleinman and Daniel (1981), unlike most other recent immigrants, the Cambodians and other Indochinese

groups found no indigenous ethnic communities to offer them support. The most difficult problem encountered by the refugees were language and cultural barriers. Lack of English language competency as well as a general lack of understanding of how things work in this country inhibited their adjustment to life in the U.S. As Strand and Woodrow, Jr. (1985) suggest, the greater the cultural differences between the newly adopted country and the refugees' country of origin, the more difficult adjustment becomes. Many of the Indochinese refugees had no experience with or information about the most fundamental American values, practices, and customs.

Besides grappling with psychological and emotional difficulties, the Cambodian refugees were confronted with the problem of becoming economically self-sufficient. Many, perhaps the great majority, lacked occupational skills which could be directly applied to the U.S. labor market. Most of the jobs open to them offered low pay and little opportunity for advancement. This caused an emotional crisis for many, resulting from feelings of deprivation and loss of prestige. More importantly, the Cambodians and other new immigrants of color face the same pervasive oppression and discrimination faced by other people of color in American society.

Cambodians of Nuhome Valley

The pattern of refugee resettlement in the northeastern state focused on in this study reflects many of the national trends following the influx of refugees from Southeast Asia. Nuhome Valley (NV) has received a larger share of all Indochinese refugees resettled in this particular state since 1981. By 1982, at least 400 of these refugees, or three percent of the state total, had been initially resettled in the valley. However, over the last five years this number has dramatically increased to 2,061 (12% of the state total). Of the present Cambodian population in NV, over three quarters (79%) were originally resettled in the area; only one fifth (21%) were secondary migrants. Most of this population (62%) had lived in the valley from four to nine years; less than 10% lived in the area over ten years.

A recent demographic survey focusing specifically on the Cambodian community in NV showed a total of 682 people, divided fairly evenly between males [354] and females [328] (Samakom Khmer, 1991). Figure 3 clearly indicates a community of younger people where well over half of the population [64%] was under the age of 30. Only five percent of the total population was 60 or older. Of the 185 total households, less than half (44%) were nuclear families; 30% were single-parent households; 19% were single adults and unaccompanied minors; and seven percent were extended family households.

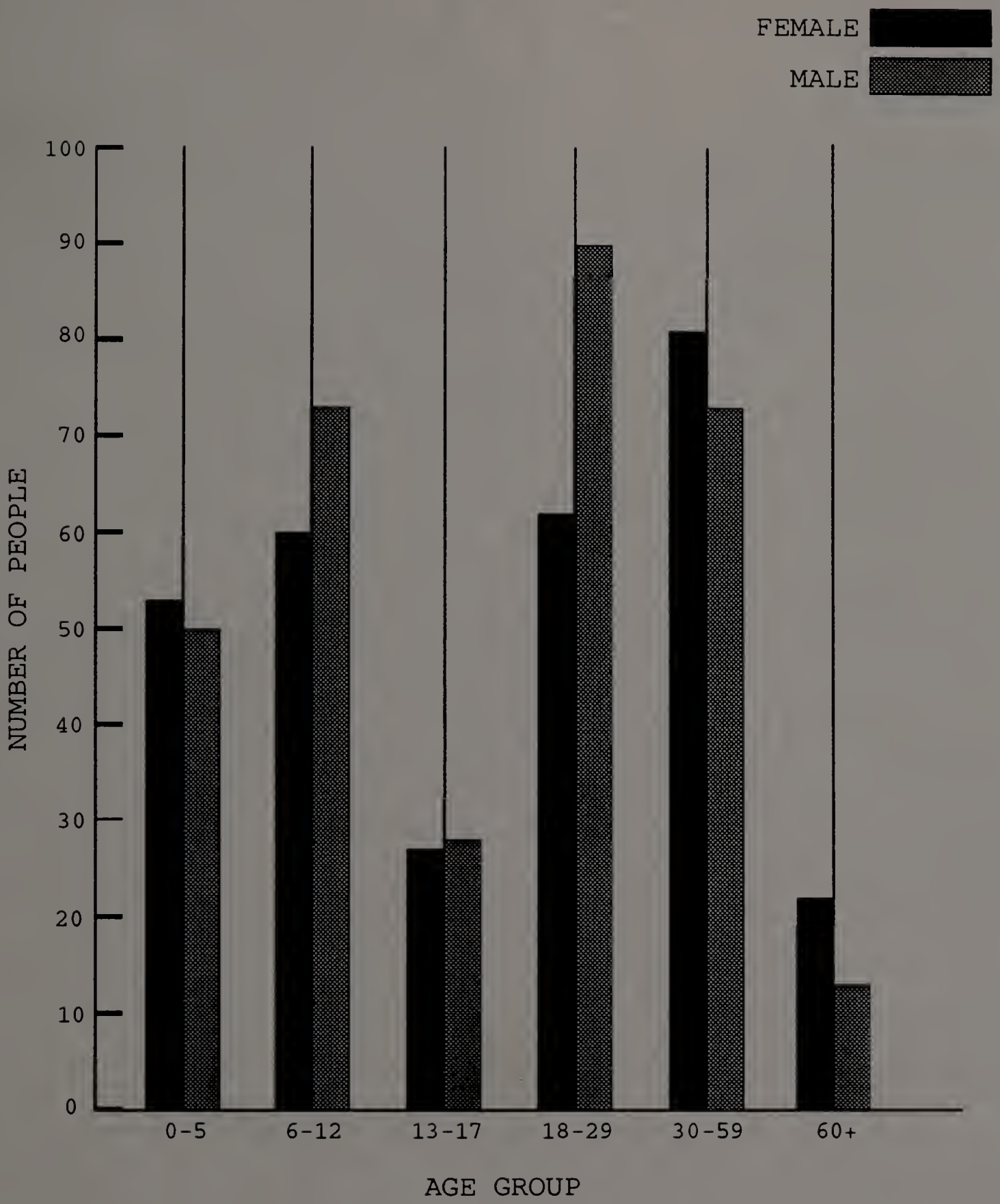

Figure 3

Age and Sex Distribution of the Cambodian Population in Nuhome Valley

Of the 239 people who responded to questions about income, over half (63%) were on government assistance and 37% were employed. Of the 340 adults asked about schooling, only four percent indicated they had formal schooling in Cambodia; three-quarters had either never had any schooling or did not respond to the question. About 20% adults were currently enrolled in western-type education; 33% attended institutions of higher education.

The resettlement of Indochinese refugees in NV has been conducted by a number of voluntary agencies (VOLAGS). There were two distinct patterns of resettlement in the valley. Prior to 1980, Vietnamese were the primary refugees and a conventional case-management approach was used to resettle them. This approach relied on acculturation programs such as ESL (English as a Second Language) and employment training in order to make the refugees self-sufficient as quickly as possible. After 1980, a strategy of cluster resettlement was used by one VOLAG to resettle the Cambodians in NV. This latter approach created a "refugee community" by resettling clusters of refugees in communities through the supportive network of sponsoring churches and families (Burton, 1983). Thus, the Cambodians in NV were initially scattered in small groups among numerous communities in the valley. However, secondary migration changed this distribution in the past decade. According to the recent demographic survey (Samakom Khmer, 1991), almost

half of the Cambodians lived in one town, and the rest were dispersed among neighboring communities.

The cross-cultural transition of Cambodians in NV generally reflects an experience similar to Indochinese refugees elsewhere in the U.S. As revealed in the community assessment report (Samakom Khmer, 1991), the Cambodians of NV were experiencing cultural change and transition. The issues of family and well-being are striking example of what they have to contend with. Intergenerational conflict and physical abuse were frequently attributed to the change in family structure and traditions. The presence of gambling and alcoholism was also seen as causing family disharmony. Most Cambodians of NV reported experiencing fatigue, stress, depression, loneliness, homesickness, physical illness, and spiritual malaise. Women experienced these symptoms and difficulties more often than men.

Despite the hardships faced by cultural dislocation, the NV Cambodians used their cultural ties and traditions to cope with this transition. They tended to turn to their own community for social and spiritual support, often relying on the informal network of family and friends before seeking help from American sponsors and agencies. Nonetheless, they viewed government services and support critical to their survival in their new home. The assessment showed the most vulnerable population, in terms of need and dependency, were elders and women.

Buddhism continued to be an integral part of community life for the Cambodians of NV. Religious holidays brought the community together. The community also worked together to raise funds to build a Buddhist temple. Although, at the time of this writing, this temple had not been built, a temporary temple was set up in an apartment in the town where most Cambodians live. The desire to have a permanent temple was, and continues to be, a contentious issue for the community, causing a rift in the community which we highlight later in the study. Though the temple and the Buddhist Society provided spiritual leadership in the community, Cambodians of NV felt the need for a vehicle to articulate and address community needs. This feeling resulted in forming and developing SK, the MAA focused on in this study.

The Ethnic Organization: Samakom Khmer (SK)

SK's History

Samakom Khmer (SK) was formed in 1988 by a small group of Cambodians and Americans from a community in Nuhome Valley. Its goal was to link the many small and often isolated Cambodian communities scattered throughout the region. Lack of resources, however, had prevented this goal from being met and a necessary outreach expansion never took place. In the absence of resources to hire staff or provide

services, the organization was barely functional. The board of directors met a few times but were generally inactive. The organization was kept alive only through the efforts of one American volunteer, assisted by a few Cambodians. Consequently, the organization was virtually unknown to the Cambodian community in NV. All this changed when the Office of Refugees and Immigration (ORI) announced the availability of funding to develop and strengthen MAAs for newcomer communities.

SK, in response to this opportunity, began to lay the necessary groundwork to strengthen its chances of getting ORI funding. It had to demonstrate the need for regional expansion and cooperation from various communities. Therefore, SK sought the assistance of a Khmer Student Association (KSA) and the Center for Community Participation (CCP) - both based in a local state university. Through the organizing efforts of the young KSA members, SK brought together representatives of NV Cambodian communities to explore how the organization could be reorganized and expanded to better reflect the needs of the Cambodian community. A series of meetings, sparsely attended initially, eventually attracted people representing all facets of Cambodian life, including the Buddhist Society (BS) and the only Buddhist monk in the valley. This culminated in a petition signed by over 125 Cambodians expressing their interest in having a regional MAA. The diversity of this group - elders, students, and non-

Cambodian volunteers - provided a forum to discuss the intent and scope of the project. Such evidence of community and regional cooperation indicated to ORI the readiness of SK and the need of Cambodian community to have a regional ethnic organization.

In 1990, ORI awarded a three year grant to SK to build its capabilities and to expand as a regional organization. KSA's organizing efforts and CCP's grantsmanship skills strengthened SK's success in obtaining the grant. This funding allowed SK to hire a part-time executive director, form a new board of directors, develop its organizational capabilities, and establish an office in the town where the largest population of Cambodians lived. As a revitalized and restructured organization, SK now sought a role in helping a widely dispersed population develop a sense of community.

During the first year of the grant SK had to restructure and revitalize itself. It had critical internal needs including the need to make its structure and procedures operational. Equally essential was the need to develop and strengthen the organizational skills of the new board and staff as they sought to provide leadership for a regional organization. This involved building leadership among the younger KSA members who were in large part, responsible for organizing the community and carrying out the task of forming a new regional board.

Board formation was a contentious issue from the start between the older Cambodians from the original local board and the young emerging KSA leaders. The younger leaders did not agree with how the board representatives were selected or how the executive leadership was elected. The challenge of resolving this issue will be elaborated in a later section. Despite the delay in board selection, a new regional board was formed. The next step taken by SK was to hire a Cambodian from the community as its executive director. The new board selected one of the emerging young leaders, not a KSA member, who had been an active member of the organizing effort from the start.

Once the board and staff were in place, CCP was asked to conduct training for the organization's members. One workshop oriented members to the basics of "what is an organization" and "how to run an organization". The other workshop focused on the role and responsibility of board and staff. These sessions were intended to give board and staff the basic understanding and skills to operate SK. Subsequently, the executive director and several board members attended ORI-sponsored workshops on organizational development with other MAAs. These workshops, in addition to meetings with CCP staff, became the training ground for the executive director and three board members.

Another goal during the first year of grant-funded activities was to conduct the demographic/assessment study of the Cambodian population in NV mentioned earlier. SK

conducted the study with the assistance of KSA and CCP. While KSA supplied bilingual Cambodian students to do interviews, CCP provided training and technical assistance in community assessment. During this project, the executive director and some board members attended regular meetings to plan and implement the study. The activity itself became a vehicle to develop leadership skills of the SK board and staff.

SK made attempts to nurture relations with its ethnic community. This was necessary to maintain ties and gain support from the community. SK held community meetings, sponsored the Cambodian New Year celebration, and assisted with Buddhist Society (BS) festivals. Despite these efforts, SK needed a better image in the community. The BS members at that time were in the middle of a conflict and wanted to involve SK. SK's involvement became a contentious issue with the board. In addition to BS, the community in general expected services. The ORI grant, however, did not include funds for provision of services, only for developing the organization.

Restructuring SK the first year enhanced the Cambodians' sense of having responsibility and ownership of their organization and having a voice for their community. The revitalized board was enthusiastic because many things had been accomplished. They met monthly and attendance was good. This built a solid foundation on which SK members could move forward to the second year. In the second year,

however, enthusiasm waned and attendance declined. Board meetings were sparsely attended or sometimes they had to be postponed due to low attendance. Board training was not provided by CCP. Although board development was still part of the second year's goals, it did not seem a priority for the executive leaders. SK's second year focused more on obtaining grants from other funders to provide services and establishing relations with the mainstream community. This effort, however, was done solely by the executive director with minimal help from the executive board.

The executive director, more than the board leaders, attended ORI's statewide sessions and local service providers' meetings. He had opportunities to discover the human service system from a different perspective. He was successful in obtaining small grants from local funders to hire a part-time outreach worker. Having a new staff, SK was now able to provide minimal services for the community. Provision of services, however, was limited only to one community of NV. KSA volunteers were also recruited to conduct Khmer language classes for children. Reactions from the particular community being served were positive and encouraging. Other Cambodians communities, however, were not as happy with SK not responding to their needs. Despite new accomplishments in providing services and while commending the director's efforts in fundraising, the SK board was more concerned about obtaining substantial long-term funding for the organization beyond ORI's grant. SK's

priorities at that time of this study were to develop a financial base and to expand services.

SK's Ethnic Board and Staff

There were eleven board and two staff members in the SK organization. Because they are the primary focus of the study, a brief profile of their personal background is provided. SK members are grouped according to age, a typology relevant to the traditional Cambodian values in which treatment and behavior vary by age. Each group reflects general characteristics of SK members in that category. However, it is important to note that diversity exists among individuals within the group.

Elders. The group of elders was composed of three men over 55 years of age. The oldest was a gold miner, one was a farmer, and the third worked for the military as a soldier and nurse's aide. Their family and social experiences were deeply rooted in rural Cambodian society, and in this regard they were perhaps typical of this social class among Khmer refugees. As was the tradition for male Cambodians in the pre-Khmer Rouge period, each became a Buddhist monk for a period of time one for over six years. They came to the U.S. with their nuclear or extended families in the early 1980's after spending varying lengths of time in refugee camps in Thailand. Despite exposure to language and

occupational training programs since their arrival, they have remained unemployed.

Middle-persons. This group was composed of two men and one woman between the age of 35-50, all married. All three, coming from middle-class families, had completed secondary school in Cambodia. After a number of years in refugee camps, the two married men migrated to the U.S. with their families. One moved to the area four years ago after living in other parts of the U.S. where he had been active in the Cambodian community. The second man had just recently arrived from a refugee camp in Thailand two years ago. He, however, worked as a para-professional with voluntary agencies in the camp for over ten years. After his arrival, he started working part-time as an outreach worker with a human service agency in NV. The woman came seven years ago as a single person with other siblings and eventually married an American. She was a bilingual teacher in a local elementary school. At the time of this study, the three middle-persons were pursuing a college degree.

Young Members. The largest group consisted of seven men (5 board and 2 staff members) between the ages of 22-30. Most had only vague recollections of their life in Cambodia; and their experience in the refugee camps seemed in the distant past. They all came to the U.S. as young adolescents and three were orphans who were resettled as

unaccompanied minors. They lived with American foster parents until they reached legal age. Two came with their Cambodian nuclear families, and one came as part of an extended family. All attended secondary schools in NV; the majority went to the same local high school, and were pursuing a college-level education. One had two years of college and was temporarily taking time off, and three were completing an undergraduate degree. The remaining three were pursuing masters degrees while concurrently working as professionals: a teacher, a counselor, and a social worker for a human service agency.

Given the SK members' social characteristics and history, age groupings capture some similarities and differences of experience. It is worth noting that the executive director, outreach worker, and board president belonged to the younger group members, and the only female board member was a middle-person. The significance of these groups of elders, middle-persons, and young members will become clearer in later chapters as we describe the interpersonal and intergroup dynamics of various members. Before proceeding to a discussion of these dynamics, it is important to first indicate what the ethnic board and staff used as a model in developing SK. What follows is a profile of a formal organization in the American context which this study uses as a framework to examine SK's organizational dimensions.

The American Context

This section provides a contextual frame of reference for the dominant U.S. standard of formal community organization. First, we have to differentiate between groups which are composed of individuals and formal organizations which include individuals, groups, and sub-units. MAAs, like other community organizations, are formal organizations established for specific purposes with patterns of formal and informal social interaction and shared perspectives (Cox & Erlich, 1979). SK, a formal organization, is examined in this study as an open social system (Kotter, 1976; Katz & Kahn, 1978) composed of interrelated internal subsystems and with other external systems outside of the organization. These represent the organizational and interorganizational dimensions of MAAs.

Certain universal elements of formal organizations exist, of which two key elements are formal structures and key processes (Kotter, 1976). Structures are formal systems and procedures which provide the frameworks, patterns, and guides for organizational behavior. This study examines SK's structure of leadership, formal and informal agreements, and patterns of rules, roles, communication. Processes, shaped and limited by the structures, involve SK members and their interactions in the organization. These include specific ways they carry out decisions, conflicts, and communication.

The interorganizational dimension of community organizations is very important. SK's relations with other organizations are examined based on the patterns of linkages, power, and influence. Increasingly, there is a need to see MAAs not only as autonomous, independent organizations but also as part of a network of relationships. They can only be understood by considering their ties to various other organizations and groups sharing the environment. MAAs, like other community groups, represent a number of constituent groups, their membership is diverse, and they often deal with controversial issues.

MAAs are expected to become like other community-based organizations in the U.S. According to Williams (1985), the basic purpose of community-based organizations is "to affect power relations; to protect the turf against governmental or corporate invasions; to make service system serve, to get an equitable share of sustenance" (1985:98). Clearly, the goals of community organizations vary from providing social services to promoting social action. Nevertheless, the issues of self-governance and control are inherently political, inevitably fraught with the potential of conflict but necessary for strengthening disenfranchised communities.

In summary, we have described the richness and diversity of the traditional Cambodian culture whose values and beliefs are rooted in the Buddhist religion. We have depicted a population of Cambodian refugees who fled their country as a result of the civil war, and were resettled in

the U.S. The experience of Cambodians adapting to their new home has been a difficult and arduous process. In particular, the Cambodians of Nuhome Valley face problems of acculturation such as language and cultural barriers. With the emergence of a revitalized MAA, the Cambodians of NV are hoping that their organization will bring together the needs of their ethnic community and the resources of the mainstream community. However, as a relatively new MAA, Samakom Khmer also has had to cope with and adapt to the dominant model of community organization. We turn now to the main focus of this study: SK's process of cross-cultural adaptation.

CHAPTER 5

PROCESSES OF CROSS-CULTURAL ADAPTATION

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of this study. Generative themes gleaned from this activity reflect the intercultural processes occurring in the organization. These themes emerge from several key questions. What are the organization's reactions and experiences in forming and developing SK? What accounts for SK's observed reactions, and what have been the effects of their reactions? The presentation of the findings, as explained in Chapter 3, is intended to separate the spoken words and observed behavior from the researcher's interpretations. This will allow readers to draw their own inferences.

Each major theme has two components. The first part presents the reactions and experiences of SK members faced with intercultural conflict which occurs as they create and develop their organization. These themes are categorized as learning new concepts, understanding new roles, negotiating social relationships, maintaining ethnic identity, developing relations with the ethnic community, and establishing relations with the dominant community. The second part analyzes the effects resulting from and corresponding to individual reactions and represent an interpretation and analysis of these processes. The analysis is presented in terms of interpreting symbols,

making new roles, restructuring social arrangements, reshaping ethnic identity, creating images in the ethnic community, and defining relations with the dominant community. Each major theme describes SK's verbal and behavioral reactions, followed by an interpretation of the effects of those reactions. It is also important to note that the informants' quotes have not been edited unless they are included as part of the description or interpretation of events.

Learning New Concepts

SK members had to initially learn new concepts about community organizations. They needed to understand the notion of a mutual assistance association and the idea of being on a governing board.

Mutual Assistance Association

Ever since the initial effort of developing and expanding the SK to become regionally-based, the Cambodians directly involved had been struggling with what a mutual assistance association (MAA) is. Simply put, they did not fully understand the concept of community organizations. Several times in community meetings, task group meetings and training, the idea of a community organization was explained by comparing it to a group of village elders. For most

Cambodians, this cross-cultural comparison provided a good start in understanding the notion of an MAA. In training and interviews when asked to make other cultural comparisons, the board offered various response which included concepts of organizational structure:

> A middle-person: "Something similar to committee we have in high school. We have officers like president, treasurer, and secretary who were elected by the students. Students assemble in auditorium and principal ask to pick up names for nomination and they put name of their choice and ballots are counted."
>
> An elder: "By comparing to the structure of organization in Cambodia and refugee camp, we have done something that we can depend on but it's different from that. It's not the same, in Cambodia, in refugee camp, when people need something, they can go to village leader or in refugee camp, go to group leader or block leader to ask them for help. SK now people ask for help and SK can help them but not as much."
>
> An elder: "There is no organization like the SK, but in Cambodia, they organize the community like a family leader, like 50 family leader or 100 family leader. The structure is similar to Lo Nol regime, almost like the SK, so people can be reached out. In each village, there is a leader for people to reach out."
>
> A young member: "Khmer Rouge uses 'angkha' which means its organization. The structure has a community leader in each town who's responsible to district leader. He oversees about 20 people, each person in charge of some aspects of town activities and this person instruct the people to do daily work."

SK members' responses disclosed knowledge of some forms of informal and formal organizations. Elders and middle-persons mentioned types with which they were previously involved or more familiar in their home country. While most of the younger members had never seen traditional structure

of organizations, some could identify ones vaguely remembered from childhood or recently learned from older Cambodian immigrants. Nevertheless, the members understood only the basic idea of an organization's structure, but not its intricate relationships and complex processes. Some, however, had better knowledge than others. One elder, a monk for six years, explained:

> An organization and the Buddhist temple have something in common. They both have rules or law that must be followed and obeyed. The law in the Buddhist temple is the law of the religion that executed by the monk leader, usually, the oldest monk in the temple. Every monk must obey the law. In an organization, the president has power or authority to supervise the other. The law is in the president hands. In the Buddhist temple, the leader of the temple hold the authority power, law. They must unite and respect the other monks who have been the monk longer than them. The monks also must understand the rank of the monks in the temple. A monk must respect the higher ranking monks. When a monk violate the rule or law, he must be punished in the Buddhist way. Therefore, people who used to be the Buddhist monk use unity to solve social problems. I think that the structure of the temple and the SK is similar.

The members had to also learn the notion of MAA as a self-help organization. Promoting self-help and self-reliance was clearly reflected in SK's formal mission, goals, and objectives. The perception of having their own organization to "help their community in the new culture" was generally held by all members. But they also realized the magnitude of this task. When asked why was it important to have an SK, they emphasized different objectives. All, but especially elder members, emphasized "preserving culture

and traditions"; most want to "provide better services to their community"; and a couple mentioned the importance of "organizing the community and representing the community's voice."

Governing Board

Governing and running their own organization was a new experience for the board and staff. All had been associated with some type of organized structure after they had arrived in the U.S., either as community workers of service agencies or as members of the Buddhist Society (BS) or the Khmer Student Association (KSA). But, none had sat on a formal governing board of an organization except for some younger members who served on an advisory council. Consequently, the role of a governing board was a new concept for them.

While members of the board somewhat understood the goal and purpose of the organization, they were less clear in their own role as a governing unit. The orientation training helped initially, but they still had not internalized the concept of a board. The year prior to writing this study was a continuous learning process for them, where they clarified their role and responsibilities. For some, concrete tasks such as reviewing and revising SK bylaws or developing a strategic plan required by ORI were easier to conceptualize. Yet, how these bylaws and plans were operationalized was met with a mixture of ignorance,

confusion, and indifference. "Bylaws" and "strategic plan" became yet more abstractions to be deciphered.

More than younger members, elders had no idea what they could contribute to the board. They were orientated toward the community and relied on the young to understand the laws of the new culture. One stated: "The old people do not expect the young to do everything for them. We only need and expect the young to tell us how to do things legally. The young know the laws in this country." While younger members of the board had a better idea of its governing role, nearly all were confused about the difference between the board's policy role and the director's executive role. Likewise, the board president and the executive director were perplexed with the delineation of their roles in the organization's daily operation.

Interpreting Symbols

Oberg contends that "culture shock is precipitated by the anxiety resulting from losing all our familiar signs and symbols" (1960:176). These signs and symbols are the cues by which we give meaning to things in our environment. Hence, when the Cambodians ventured into a new country, they were confronted with unfamiliar symbols of the dominant culture. Their struggle to understand and interpret these signs and symbols continued at the time of this writing as they ventured into the nonprofit world.

As a first step toward participating in the development of their ethnic organization, the Cambodians had to learn to interpret symbols of organizational life in the dominant culture. These were symbols for such concepts as organization, volunteerism, self-help, and governing board. Because these symbols either take a different form or are non-existent in Cambodian culture, they were unfamiliar to nearly all SK members. Only a few members, acquainted with similar institutions during their own individual process of acculturation, had some understanding of them.

Learning to interpret new symbols began as soon as the Cambodian community decided to form its own organization. From the beginning, nearly all Cambodians who participated in community meetings were unfamiliar with the concept of a western organization. On the other hand, the staff and board during training and interviews revealed familiarity with the notion of "organization". They were able to provide comparable concepts in their home country such as school committees, village elders, and even the Khmer Rouge structure. The temple was the only private institution comparable to the western concept of nonprofit organization. But these cultural equivalents to western organizations did not help the board and staff to comprehend more elaborate concepts, such as bylaws, roles, and policies.

The notion of a self-help community organization like an MAA was even less familiar to them. Only a few younger members, having worked with voluntary agencies in the camps

and the U.S., understood this concept. With the exception of the temple, the general welfare of the people in Cambodia has traditionally been the concern of government. Western-type nonprofits in urban areas were relatively few before the civil war (Steinberg, 1959). In post-Khmer Rouge Cambodia, however, nonprofits, known as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), have recently emerged and increased in numbers. All SK members had their first contacts with NGOs in refugee camps in Thailand or the Philippines. This interaction eventually led to contact with nonprofit U.S. sponsors such as churches and voluntary agencies. Nevertheless, it was altogether a new experience for all members to have nonprofits assist their cultural transition to the new country.

In traditional societies like Cambodia, individuals are usually helped in their personal life transitions within the supporting environment of family and community. Customs and traditions guide these "rites of passage" (Steinberg, 1959; Ebihara, 1971). Where the network of support no longer exists nor old cultural patterns practiced, self-help groups or organizations like MAAs become the substitute to help individuals and groups in their "rites of passage" to the new culture. In this context, the idea of self-help takes on a new meaning. Hence, under the pressure of drastic social change in the Cambodian community, SK became the main support instead of family and community helping Cambodians learn a new language, understand the cultural environment,

find employment, and use mainstream American institutions. A responsibility for self-help, once attributed to immediate family circles in the old culture, was now transferred to an organization.

Volunteerism is the foundation of self-help organizations like MAAs. Only one member had served on an advisory council. Therefore, participation on a voluntary board was a new experience for SK members. At some point, all members had volunteered informally to serve their community, and some had been asked by sponsors, schools, or fellow nationals to help with new arrivals. Nevertheless, volunteering in a formal capacity for an organization took on a meaning totally different from the Cambodian notion of volunteering.

In Cambodia, volunteerism takes the form of Buddhist "merit making", "helping a relative or friend" to meet extended family obligation, or "building a dam" in the village out of a sense of community solidarity. These types of voluntary service for Cambodians are different from the western model of community service. In Buddhism, "merit-making" is the "most important vehicle to strengthen and improve one's character which will contribute to the slow process of deliverance from imperfection" (Steinberg, 1959:62). The most visible form of "merit-making" in the community described here was associated with religious celebrations and fundraising activities to build a Buddhist temple. These acts enabled individuals to accumulate real

world "merit" as an investment in a more elevated or religiously-pure being in a future existence. Thus, the motivation of the elders who served on the SK board to benefit the BS was in line with this notion of "merit-making".

Most individuals in developing countries like Cambodia volunteer time within the "very demanding but also supporting environment of their extended family" (Fussell and Quarmby, 1985:282). The community assessment (Samakom Khmer, 1991) of the Cambodians in this study showed they also provided voluntary service within the context of family, and often extended their "helping hand" to the larger community as well. Cambodians needing assistance still depended on a network of family and friends. As some board members disclosed, individuals who could negotiate both the Cambodian and mainstream systems because of education and language skills emerged as informal leaders and were tapped as resources by both systems.

But volunteering for an organization as a board member was an unfamiliar experience to the Cambodians. It required formal role-playing among other new skills, assumed deep commitment, and demanded time away from family. One board member complained: "This is taking time from important things like the family, and I can make more money [doing part-time jobs]."

In the dominant culture, volunteerism is generally the activity of financially and socially-secure people of the

middle or upper class. Among low income people, and especially people of color, volunteering has been difficult for social and economic reasons. In the Cambodian community in Nuhome Valley, very few Cambodians were inclined to do voluntary service such as providing transportation and translation. The few that did, however, did so not because they possessed economic and career security, but for other reasons.

One of the basic motivations for volunteering among SK's board and staff was altruism, construed as a form of "merit making." In addition, some members had learned the benefits in the new culture of doing voluntary service. Like other American volunteers, they realized that it could translate into personal and professional benefits. The younger members wanted to prove themselves as well as to gain practical and professional experience that would benefit future employment. Likewise, the middle-persons saw volunteering as a way to gain skills and credentials useful in the new culture.

Understanding New Roles

Individual Roles

The Cambodian board and staff members had to learn new roles as a result of their position in the organization.

Therefore they were continually learning modes of behavior consistent with their new roles.

For example, the status of younger members in their new leadership positions became elevated to that of their elders. The young were conscious of this predicament. Frequently, they felt awkward and uncomfortable. The board president, a young member, sometimes felt uneasy to be put in the "spotlight," knowing that in traditional culture elders or older people would hold his position.

> When I facilitate a meeting, the elders don't accept that or feel uncomfortable because I put myself in a position that you're on stage, the elder should do that.

Similarly, the executive director and the outreach worker - both young - felt that the elders accepted their advise only when they acted as translators or interpreters of the legal or formal aspects of the new culture. When they tried to talk about the social implications of being in the new culture - such as intergenerational problems in the family - the elders were not receptive. Intergenerational issues were particularly complex since they were manifested in everyday board dynamics. In general, however, the younger members seemed pleased by their new role and status because they felt they were in a position to do something for their community.

Additionally, some young board members grappled with having to interact with each other on a professional rather

than a social basis. Since most had been friends ever since coming to this country and some had attended school together, they found it difficult to interact with each other in a professional capacity. The executive director, for example, found it difficult to be assertive with other younger members:

> Sometimes, it is difficult to be assertive. One thing, we know each other, especially the young. To be assertive in Cambodian culture, would be to say...it's because you're this, this, this and you're so hard on us. Sometimes I want to be assertive, sometimes I don't want to do that. Then, when I decided to be one, I think I should be hard and demanding but I shouldn't be.

In contrast to the younger members who found these new roles meaningful and empowering, the elders found their roles alienating, accentuating their sense of uselessness. They felt unable to contribute to SK because they did not understand the new culture. They saw the young as more competent because they were better educated. One elder stated, "if some old people have better knowledge to help the organization, it will be very good. But old people, like me, like a 'rotten fish' is useless as board member."

The only female board member found her membership as "something she [would] never be able to do in Cambodia as a woman." Being on the board made her feel respected and important. She wanted to set an example for other women in the community and hoped to encourage others to join the board. For her, this new role was empowering like the young

but opposite to the elders. When asked how they felt about having a woman on the board, most young members and middle-persons said they would welcome more women and had already asked the director to recruit other women for next year.

SK as Broker and Gatekeeper

SK, as the only Cambodian organization in the area, became an institution with a dual role: a broker within the ethnic community and a gatekeeper between the ethnic and the dominant community. The SK leaders discovered these roles were perplexing and difficult to maintain, but also very significant for the organization because they become empowered in these roles.

In carrying them out, SK leaders discovered the brokering role for their own community was the more difficult one. Trying to mediate between two BS groups, described later as critical incident one in Chapter 6, was a learning experience especially for the young leaders, who realized the broker role was far more complex and arduous than expected. The young were split in their position on the issue of whether SK should be a broker between the two BS groups. Some members were adamant about not being involved at all because "the issue [was] too messy." Others felt that SK, as the only legitimate structure in the community, had an obligation to assist in any way it could. Eventually, SK leaders did assume a mediating role but were

unsuccessful in helping the two groups come to a satisfactory resolution. At the time of this writing, SK was still unclear how it should work with the BS in general and whether it should only work with one BS group in particular.

On the other hand, the organization's role between the Cambodian and the dominant communities was somewhat easier. As the only Cambodian organization in the region, SK was recognized by local service providers as the "gatekeeper" to the Cambodian community. Early contacts and relations with these agencies had been congenial.

However, when the gatekeeper role became adversarial, SK was unable to maintain a clear position. When asked, for example, to advocate for Cambodian tenants in an apartment complex, SK found maneuvering between two priorities treacherous. The leadership did not know how to respond when a request by a CDC (community development corporation) to help with its tenant organizing effort threatened SK's own relations with the dominant community. As a result, they did not want to be involved. The executive director explained:

> I really don't know what we should do....it's a good idea to fix up the place but most of us live in that apartment complex. The manager already complained about using the SK office for tenant meeting. He threatened to evict us. I don't want the manager to tell me that SK can no longer have office there then I have to look for another office.... I don't know if we can afford rent in other places.

Making New Roles

In response to taking on new roles, individual members had to construct new images thereby creating different social identities for themselves. In doing so, social conventions and traditional role expectations were reconfigured as to who they were as individuals. Consequently, they challenged and altered the social hierarchy of traditional Cambodian culture because it was no longer viable in the bicultural environment. For example, the new roles, because of gender and age, changed the status of the elders, the young, and the only female member.

The elders who joined the board to regain status and prestige found their traditional role undermined by younger members. Of the group, they faced the most difficult adjustment to the new culture. In contrast to their own culture where they were the respected leaders of family and society, they were treated as second-class citizens here where youth was emphasized. Because the younger members had language and social competence needed to cope in the new culture, they became the "cultural brokers" for the elders. Moreover, the elders recognized that the younger members are better able to deal with formal matters of the organization.

The young members, mindful of the elders' cultural wisdom and knowledge, were conscious of the dilemma that their emerging leadership created. They tried to find leadership images that would be least offensive to their

elders, such as using respectful gestures and language. However, they were not always careful and behaved inappropriately by Cambodian standards. The middle-persons found themselves caught in between the progressive interests of the young and the traditional ways of the elders. Consequently, they were looked upon by both sides to assume a "go-between" role whenever intergenerational conflicts emerged. While the role of some young members and middle-persons evolved into more concrete forms, the role of elders on the board was not well-defined.

The only woman on the board developed a social identity different from other women in the traditional culture. In Khmer culture, like many traditional societies, the public domain is generally reserved for men, while the domestic domain is reserved for women. Thus, she had to overcome these cultural barriers to having women in the public domain. As a member of the SK board, she definitely put herself in a public position. Though younger members expressed acceptance of this, elders, when asked about her membership, were reluctant to give an opinion. As a bilingual teacher, this woman already had a professional identity. As a board member, she created another identity for the social arena that challenged traditional women's roles in Cambodian culture.

In addition to the new roles taken by individual members, SK's overall role as a broker within the ethnic community and a "go-between" between the ethnic and the

mainstream community was relatively new. Placed in this role, SK was met with high expectations both from within and outside their community. The broker role in resolving community conflict was traditionally given to well-respected, usually older, members of the community. Hence, because of their age, young leaders attempting to resolve conflicts between the two BS groups led by community elders were already vulnerable. The younger members were seen by BS elders as young and inexperienced from the start. Moreover, the younger members' indecisiveness on SK's position with respect to the BS groups increased the tension between generations and marred SK's image in the community.

As for SK's role as bridge to the mainstream community, SK members who were also social workers were already accustomed to being individual "gatekeepers." Once they became part of an ethnic organization, they, along with the rest of SK's stakeholders, formalized these roles, becoming the official gatekeepers of their community. This implied a social and political advocacy role that they had never taken on individually before. In traditional Cambodian society, the same role was usually assumed by village elders or "headmen." Additionally, taking on a social and political role in the adversarial, confrontational dominant culture required members to challenge the complacent and non-confrontational norm of Khmer relations. Hence, constructing new roles had implications for the social

relations of SK members as a group, within and outside the community.

Negotiating Social Relationships

Between the Generations

> Having the young and old on the board is difficult but have to work together; the young not too sensitive to old and the old don't understand the young.

This remark by an elder captures the essence of the difficulties experienced by the board. No where was this more apparent than in the board dynamics where interpersonal and intragroup relations caused tension and constant negotiations.

Criticisms by older members directed at the organization's leaders were attributed to age. The elders saw younger members as inexperienced and ineffective. At the same time, however, they acknowledged that the young were better educated, better able to communicate in English, and better able to access the dominant system. The middle-persons concurred with this perception about the young. "Being educated is not necessary in order to be a leader in Cambodia" was a statement both SK staff and board agreed with. But here in the U.S., both knew that education had become an indispensable credential for leaders or for anyone helping the community.

While the young agreed that their inexperience was a disadvantage, they viewed their energy, commitment, and stamina as well as their education and acculturation to American society as essential qualities for the growth of the organization. They felt that through their leadership and effort SK had grown into an effective regional organization. There was a sense of ownership and commitment from those who were involved from the beginning. As one young member remarked:

> I don't know what I'm doing here...all I know is I came because I was involved with the SK from the start. That time was a learning process. We provided the energy to get things done but I learn from it, by doing things. It's a practical learning experience. I don't want SK to fail because if it fails, I feel like it's my failure also. I want to make it work because it's part of my effort. Not just me or the young university students, but to see the community say, "oh, my younger citizens want to help us; they have education." I want them to look at us differently from the past.

Among the Young

Working together as colleagues, the young members found interacting in a professional capacity disconcerting. Ever since arriving in the U.S. as adolescents with their families or as unaccompanied minors, they had been close friends. All went to the same local high school and university. Except for one who claimed: "I feel like an outsider...," most peer relations had already been defined in a social context. When placed together under different

circumstances, the young members felt uneasy and uncomfortable about their peer relations.

Nearly all the young recognized some of their professional limitations and immaturity. In meetings, some felt their behavior was unprofessional and inappropriate, and sought ways to change it. Here are comments from some young members assessing their own behavior:

> So we need to learn how to negotiate better and listen to each other instead of yelling and screaming. We raise our voice in another level, everybody is arguing.
>
> There's another thing that some of the new generation has not learned and that is how to separate personal and professional. So some of these people, they are not really doing their work; they're doing things because of their personal beliefs.
>
> We come to the meeting and have an agenda and then the meeting is a mess. It's very frustrating.
>
> We have to improve how we behave in meetings. One thing is the individual behavior, how one conducts himself. Like at the last meeting, everything went smoothly. Then when ...[name deleted]... came, he just laid down on the floor. So, how can people respect something like that? This is kind of very informal.

Similarly, the executive director was uncomfortable relating to members of his own generation: the board president, his staff, and his peers on the board. Surprisingly, he felt better able to relate to older members as reflected in this dialogue:

> Q: In your role as a director, what is most difficult in relating to your staff or board?
>
> A: I have more problem relating to the those who are the same age as I am, some of them have been my

friends. For example, it is hard for me to get Mim [a volunteer teacher] to talk. She has been teaching the kids and sometimes they are rowdy. And I want to call her to my to office to talk but it is hard for me to do that. It took a lot of my guts to call her and talk to her.

Q: Is it difficult because you are young and working with your own peers?

A: Yes. You have to understand that sometime we are not professional because we have been friends. We hesitate to say something humiliating to each other, we do not want to do this. Culturally, I'm not used to the system that we are supposed to follow. Maybe, it is because we are the same age; we are still in school and neither of us have experience. To me, it is also probably because when I speak it is not powerful as I am in this position.

Q: Do you have problems relating to older people or the elders?

A: No, I do not have any problems.

Q: So, it is only with your peers that you're having problems?

A: Yes. It is probably because we are the same age and I respect them as college students. I respect them because they are educated people. It is very hard for me to say, "Mim, do this and do that." It is not easy.

Q: Would you have difficulty talking to the more educated older board members such as Dith?

A: No. I have talked to him. He gives me advice. It is comfortable for me to talk to the elders.

As a Cohesive Group

SK board and staff had to deal with their interpersonal and group relations. SK members wanted to establish an acceptable group norm: how to conduct themselves, when to insist on punctuality and other time constraints, how to

cooperate as professionals, and how to narrow the generation gap. This struggle to function as a cohesive working group was most visible in board meetings.

Practically all found the board meetings poorly conducted and ineffective. Younger members, dominating the meetings, spoke predominantly in English. As a result, the elders were confused and unable to participate. The middle-persons, for the most part, were perturbed with the young members' behavior, saying "they behave like students;" "they argue a lot;" or "they show no respect for the elders." The young themselves admitted that the meetings needed to be conducted in Khmer to involve the elders. They also acknowledged the need for improved facilitation, having a more focused agenda, and improving their own attendance record.

Another area of criticism by most SK members was the lack of communication between executive leaders and the board. A general feeling existed among board members of not knowing "what was going on with SK", despite the fact that executive leaders contended sufficient information had been made available. Part of the problem, the board complained, was that reports shared with them were the same ones submitted to ORI which were lengthily written in English. As one middle-person suggested: "The director has to give a brief report of what happened in the last month in meetings. We have to do that to make sure that they [the board] understand what SK has accomplished."

The executive leaders admitted that communication with the board was a problem, but were in a quandary as to how to improve it because of their professional inexperience and immaturity. Though the executive director preferred an active board, knowing he needed their support and assistance to build the organization, the following statement highlights the frustration he felt working with them:

> There is certain invisible things that the board do not see me doing like legal aspects, contacts with organization. It's hard for them to understand what I'm doing. I only work part time and the board recognizes and tell me I work more hours but there are so many things to do .....I am looking for ways to communicate with them. It is in English and some do not understand what I am talking about. Sometimes I show a proposal to the board president, he sets aside and do not look at it. It seems he does not care. I present proposal to the board and they do not look at it. I like this position but it is so frustrating. There are so many things to think about, sometimes I want to give up.

The planning of the New Year celebration was perhaps the most revealing scenario where despite these social contradictions and other conflicts the group cooperated to pull off a successful event. The period was characterized by a mixture of tension, discord, harmony, and excitement within and between generations. The group spent many hours in this atmosphere of mixed emotion to form committees, plan entertainment, recruit volunteers for food preparation, decide whether to charge entrance fees, and promote the event. The group had to overcome disagreements and other barriers. Despite these hurdles, they came out of this

event with a sense of accomplishment. There was a spirit of pride and joy of "pulling the event off." The elders used the event as a good example where the BS and SK worked together. As one young member remarked when asked what SK has accomplished:

> So far, at least there is something has changed. Like organizing activities for New Year... we did not have that before. It has always been organized by Lutheran Services or other people. Of course, if there was not an SK, we still can do organizing but it will be difficult because there is no tracking. It is like anyone who would volunteer can show up anytime. But now we have SK we have plan to do things. At least if the community has questions, they can be answered and the community can give us assistance.

Restructuring Social Arrangements

The changing scene of social relations among Cambodians played a critical role in the group dynamics of the SK members. The hierarchical nature of social relations as elaborated earlier was constantly being challenged because of the intergenerational schism experienced by the community. This cultural tension produced behavioral adjustment between and among generations in the organization.

The literature about Indochinese refugees and immigrants is replete with studies showing intergenerational conflicts resulting from changes in these traditional social structures. As the basic social unit, the family has undergone many changes: involuntary separation of members;

role reversal of parent and child; and acculturation of younger family members among others. All these contribute to the changes occurring in the social hierarchy, which, in turn, widens the schism between generations. SK was no exception in experiencing such intergenerational conflict. Members had to find ways to negotiate new social relations. Consequently, the traditional social hierarchy was being restructured within the organizational context.

In general, the younger generation in the Cambodian community had undergone an acculturation to a more individualistic and independent lifestyle. This influenced their behavior toward the older generation. On a one-to-one basis, the younger SK members seemed careful to show respect to their elders. But as a group, they tended to reinforce accepted dominant norms of being outspoken and "speaking their minds." Oftentimes, they forgot the presence of elders, who expected a more traditional behavior from them.

In this context, it is interesting to note that the executive director had more difficulty relating to his peers than with older members. Given that the boss-worker relationship is traditionally one between older and younger, the opposite was true within SK's structure. There, the relation between the board president and executive director, and between the executive director and the staff, was one between young and young. The young members hence experienced lateral and equal social relations not defined in the traditional boss-worker hierarchy, causing them to

define such relations among themselves. This resulted in the restructuring of a previously well-defined social hierarchy.

These changes in social structure caused difficulties for SK group cohesiveness which depended on how well individuals related to each other, that is, how well members of the organization found common ground in negotiating acceptable behavior between and among generations in somewhat altered social expectations. The assimilative forces of the new culture had undoubtedly influence SK's social structure as well as its ethnic identity.

Maintaining Ethnic Identity

Preserving Culture and Traditions

As stated earlier, cultural preservation was one of the most important SK goals. When asked in what ways the organization could help the community with this goal, responses included sponsoring Khmer language classes for the young, organizing the New Year holiday celebration, promoting the arts, and cooperating with the Buddhist Society in religious activities. At the time of this research, some of these activities had already been initiated. Classes to teach Khmer to two small groups of primary school children and university students had been started, and the organization had assumed sponsorship of the

Cambodian New Year celebration. Others activities, still in the planning stage, were included in the "strategic plan" submitted to ORI.

Yet, more essentially, both young and old members answered that "Buddhism is the symbol and core of Khmer culture" when asked what was most vital to their Cambodian tradition. The elders repeatedly affirmed in meetings and interviews that Buddhism - symbolizing Khmer traditions, values, and beliefs - held the community together from generation to generation. To them, preserving the culture meant knowing and practicing the Buddhist religion. But they were also realistic about the struggle to maintain its significance among the young:

> An elder: "For old people like me, Buddhism is always with us. We do not have difficulty preserving the culture. But for the younger generation, like my children, it is more difficult."
>
> A middle-person: "Religion should teach the people, not only a place for people to come to get teach, a group of people who serve in religion should go out and teach the people and preserve the place to practice and to find the best thing, both young and old should do that. Religion should be the central of compromise."

However, while the young recognized the importance of the Buddhist temple to their elders, they saw keeping the Khmer language, celebrating holidays, and promoting the arts as more viable activities SK could do to preserve the culture. But they also agreed that preserving the culture meant paying attention to the Buddhist religion; losing Buddhism and the Khmer language, they said, "[meant] losing

being a Cambodian." While the young did not hesitate to admit that ethnic identity was rooted in being Buddhist and adhering to Buddhist values, it seemed to contradict their own sense of being Cambodian and Buddhist.

> Young member: "One value that we need to bear in mind is our religion, Buddhism, because it plays such an important role in the Cambodian community. Respect our elders, have some compassion for them, don't just criticize them. Another part is to preserve for the community as an ethnic group, to have an identity and preserve our language. If you lose the language and religion, you lose everything, then if you lose it, then that is not Cambodian anymore."
>
> Young member: "The Cambodians orient their family, the younger generation to their thinking and the temple happens to be the center of that. My uncle claims that 'if I die without seeing a temple, I am nothing.' I should pay respect or give a tribute....that is our obligation and we are proud to do that. We will do that and that keep us to be Buddhist. Being Buddhist is not hard, it is very easy. If we are fine Buddhist, we do not have to go to the temple everyday."

Exclusive Board Membership

The original task group helping with SK's expansion proposed that the organization have an all-Cambodian board and a non-Cambodian advisory council. While, in principle, this structure was accepted by the newly-selected board, at this writing the advisory council had not been formed. The expanded board represented members from enclaves of Cambodians geographically dispersed throughout Nuhome Valley.

When asked whether to continue having an all-Cambodian board, board members unanimously expressed their desire to keep the organization run by Cambodians. However, they also recognized their own inexperience and need to learn from outside experts. Most welcomed having non-Cambodians "who [had] experience in the system, at least, to advise or to go along with us [the board]." They realized the advantages of having outsiders work with them, but also feared the influence of outsiders. As one young member asserted, "It is like we have always been ran by the Americans and it is time to move on. But the question is, can we move on? That is a hard question." This concern was explicitly expressed by one middle-person:

> I feel that we should have Cambodian members in SK. But we also want to invite Americans or other ethnic people who would like to participate, to share their ideas and to exchange relationship and communication. One thing to be careful, we invite them... I usually observe that when other people come, they try to dominate and convert the idea of the Cambodian community and SK, the original to the other side. I think they can be outspoken on behalf of the community but they should do it according to the principle of parliament of the organization. They should just not come and say "do this and this...that is why you can make progress." Yes, sometime we can make progress through their idea but we lost our identity. So it is not the same.

Dilemma of the Young

Unquestionably, all SK members wanted it to be their own organization, run by Cambodians, for Cambodians. But

the issue of managing and operating it raised difficulties: what language to use in meetings; how to deal with conflicts; how to work as a group. The elders were clear they preferred "doing things the Cambodian way as long as American laws are not broken." The young members, however, were more conflicted about the dilemma of maintaining ethnic identity. Exactly where each individual stood on each of these issues depended on his or her own degree of acculturation. Here are some typical comments of the young:

> I am a person that I cannot identify my identity. I don't know where I belong. I am part of an American organization but I am not Cambodian by anybody. I'm stuck in between. Language is a clear example. I can't speak 100% English nor 100% Khmer. We mix everything together and we're lost and we blame ourselves. We should choose one. There will be less pressure if we choose one language and one culture.
>
> Even for myself, I am not very much for western motivations. I get motivated and I know half of me says time is important but the other says "I'm lazy, I can wait the next day". I understand, time is precious, school is important....I do it because I want to have a better future. Part of me is confused and want to do American but then the other says differently.
>
> I think the meeting should be done in Khmer. But a lot of us, we use English instead of Khmer because it is faster to explain things in one word than in Khmer. We feel more comfortable talking English but on the other hand, we know there are older generation who do not understand English.

One young member expressed that the only way to be successful in the new culture was to become fully acculturated. He saw SK's struggle for professionalism as part of "our individual transitional process to find the

American way." He reasoned that since Cambodian immigrants were here permanently, the "wave of the future" was to assimilate and accommodate the new culture. He further predicted that the elders would have to catch up with the young or fall behind and be "lost in the dark." As he succinctly put it: "I think we have to get going....and the spirit of capitalism is unbeatable. We are on our way and those who are not moving will be crushed and will not survive."

Reshaping Ethnic Identity

DeVos and Romanucci-Ross (1975) contend that an intercultural experience forces a person to come to terms with his or her own ethnic roots, thereby, learning more about oneself. The individual gains understanding of the ethnocentrism that shapes his or her ethnic identity. To assert this ethnic identity is an empowering process for ethnic newcomer organizations. This more than anything else, they claim, provides the political and economic vehicle for their ethnicity. The shaping of ethnic identity for SK was manifested at the individual, group, and organizational levels. Cultural preservation was the most fundamental goal. Members viewed SK as a mechanism to preserve the culture through organized cultural activities to be passed on to the next generation.

All agreed that cultural preservation began with preserving the Buddhist religion, but younger members experienced more conflict around this idea. Though younger members viewed Buddhism as good and valuable, they had a superficial understanding of what it signified. Raised in refugee camps and acculturated to mainstream American society, they had never learned or seriously practiced Buddhism. Their lack of socialization as Buddhists made them insecure about their own Cambodian identity and knowledge of Cambodian culture. As practicing Buddhists, the elders' experience was different. For them following Buddhist tenets was the same as maintaining their identity as Khmers.

The desire for cultural preservation was also reflected in SK's strong inclination to have only Cambodian board members, insuring that SK would be identified as a Cambodian organization. Most members, however, acknowledged their inexperience and recognized the need for assistance from non-Cambodians in order to run the organization. They discussed ways of including non-Cambodian professionals who would share skills and expertise. But the fear of "being dominated" or "always [run] by Americans that "we [lose] our identity" overshadowed other concerns. Perhaps this fear stemmed from the members' experience first as refugees, then as immigrants, dependent on foreign patrons and sponsors for their well-being.

The dilemma of the younger members was also related to this struggle for ethnic identity. All had attended institutions of secondary and higher education in the U.S.; some had worked in human services. This interaction with educational and social institutions of the dominant society obviously influenced their acculturation process. As members were increasingly socialized through formal education and other mainstream contacts, the ethnic influences of their family and community were diminished. The result was an identity crisis of "being Cambodian-American", as one young board member labeled himself. This crisis was manifested in their behavior and would eventually affect the shaping of the whole organization's ethnic identity. Because of their numbers, younger members would ultimately determine the SK's image as an ethnic organization.

The younger members' struggle for identity was aggravated as their ethnocentric consciousness increased. Whether they liked it or not, as emerging leaders of their ethnic community, they became symbols of what it meant to be Cambodian in the U.S., as well as guardians of their community for maintaining ethnic solidarity. At the same time, paradoxically, community elders frequently criticized them for failing to uphold traditional concepts of what it was to be Cambodian. The incongruity of living in an ethnic home community while attending a mainstream school was now replaced by the incongruity of preserving SK's ethnic

identity while simultaneously assimilating practices of mainstream nonprofit institutions.

Resisting the "push and pull" forces of the bicultural environment was a challenge to SK as it shaped its identity. Oftentimes the organization would be placed in situations where it had to choose between preserving ethnic pride and identity and adapting the mainstream dominant norm. SK's ability to continue to maintain its ethnic identity undoubtedly will be influenced by the ethnic community's level of support, as well as by the strong coercive forces coming from the dominant community, particularly as SK pursues outside resources.

Developing Relations with the Ethnic Community

Organizing the Cambodian Community

The most contact SK had with the Cambodian community was during its expansion phase. It was an exciting time for the group of young Cambodians responsible for organizing the community. Because the effort was supported by the BS and its monk, the community responded to the young organizers. Expansion phase activities were inherently geared toward the community, since without the community's support and sanction neither SK's expansion nor funding would have materialized. Community meetings served as a forum for dialogue between groups representing various sub-

communities: younger and older generations, educated and less educated, progressives and traditionalists.

Conducting a community assessment of strengths and needs was another place where SK's contact with the community was critical and visible. But unlike community meetings, here contact was made by a small group of Cambodian students assisted by board members. SK's relation to the community was more structured and research-oriented during this phase, since the assessment's purpose was to explore community demographics and community strengths and weaknesses. The assessment was a powerful learning process for the students, not only to learn about themselves, but also to learn about the issues resulting from the acculturation process that affected their community as a whole.

Another activity that significantly improved the organization's reputation and relation with the community was its sponsorship of the New Year celebration. The initiative of the young organizers was especially appreciated by the BS community elders. The community event provided SK with high visibility and, like previous activities, provided an opportunity for interaction with individuals and cooperation with community groups. Consequently, the ethnic community's image of SK was most favorable during this expansion phase than at any other time.

After the New Year celebration, this high community visibility waned. The spirit and energy of community organizing was replaced by a more inward focus directed toward building the organization. SK concentrated on developing its new board and completing the community assessment project. These low- visibility activities coupled with the community's preoccupation with an emerging split between two BS groups redefined SK's relations with the community.

Services to the Cambodian Community

Providing better services to the community was one of SK's goals, a goal most members felt could be achieved given the right chance and resources. When asked about the difference between services provided by SK as opposed to those by a VOLAG (voluntary agency), one young member who worked for a voluntary agency remarked:

> The difference is cultural awareness. The hospitality of the Cambodian workers doing the work. Those type of cultural common ground make people comfortable and feel at home. People can be alienated in a bureaucratic system like the Lutheran where they have to stick to their agenda, where they really define when people come for appointment and not for any kind of real feelings. The very significant difference is that the people really want special attention....they really see that they are being help by the people who know them.

It was this issue of cultural awareness where most board members, specifically the elders, felt an urgency to

obtain funding for community needs, expanded services, and more staff and programs. Yet funding and grantsmanship were precisely the areas where the executive leaders and board most questioned their ability and skills. Nonetheless, in the year prior to this writing, the board director successfully obtained grants to hire a part-time community outreach worker. Even so, he frequently expressed a desire that the board be more helpful and that outside assistance be more forthcoming in this area.

Image in the Cambodian Community

Sk's image in the community changed over time. As mentioned earlier, its initial positive image during the expansion phase gradually eroded as the community discovered SK's limitations. Its failure to mediate a satisfactory resolution between the two BS groups or to assist the new BS group in establishing a non-profit status dampened the trust and confidence of community elders. Because of this, the elders had diminished expectations of what SK could do for the community.

Three elder board members associated with the new BS group had expected more assistance from SK in helping with legal matters. In talking to them, I discovered their motivation for joining SK was clearly in the interest of the new BS group. They had hoped a community organization would lessen the need for outside assistance: "the Samakom Khmer

can be like the 'go-between' the government and the Buddhist Society." These same elders wanted SK and BS to work together to serve the community, a sentiment echoed by other younger board members.

> I think the Samakom Khmer and Buddhist Society should go hand in hand. Like during the New Year, we work together. That is why I want a Buddhist temple in this area so that the temple can plan room for the SK to have an office. When SK has office at the temple, the people go to temple, they know the SK is there to help.

Because the executive leaders failed to help the new BS group obtain a non-profit status, the elders were disappointed. A couple of them wanted to resign: "now, the old generation do not believe in the SK anymore." This concerned the younger members who wanted elders represented on the board. At the same time, the board in general complained about SK's image in the community because the interaction started during the expansion phase with the community had not been maintained. The elders in particular claimed communication with and responsiveness to the community was ineffective. Clearly, SK's relationship with their community was extremely important to all members, though the elders were most insistent in emphasizing the importance of SK's responsiveness to community needs. They felt that SK should be more visible and work more closely with the community by collaborating with the new BS group.

Creating Images in the Ethnic Community

SK created different images as it developed and became established in the ethnic community. Some of these images could be seen in context of Cambodian tradition, while others were created as acculturation occurred. Those taking traditional forms were images resulting from SK's role as patron and "go-between". These roles raised expectations that SK would perform according to the traditional image held by the community: a powerful, wealthy, benevolent provider for all aspects of community life.

As a patron, SK would be obligated to provide for its ethnic client community. The patron image was successfully fulfilled by organizing the community, obtaining funds from ORI, and providing services. The client community reciprocated by supporting and sanctioning SK's activities. This positive image, however, eventually became tarnished, and enthusiasm and support diminished as SK was unable to meet high community expectations.

For one thing, SK could not deliver every service needed, and expected, by the community. Providing these services meant obtaining funding from sources outside the community. ORI's grant was intended only to develop the organization's capability and not provide services. While the executive director was successful in bringing in funds for a part-time outreach worker, the needs of the client community were barely met. Yet to the community, having

services and programs were the most visible indicators of how well SK fulfilled the "good patron" role.

Another disappointment to the community was the failure of SK's executive leaders to act successfully as a "go-between" in settling the dispute between the two BS factions. SK's "go-between" image raised community expectations that it would function in the role traditionally accorded to such a position; i.e., that it would settle disputes, arbitrate legal matters, and act as a bridge between cultures. The role was expected to be played in both the intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic spheres. Playing this role in the intra-ethnic sphere was more difficult for the young executive leaders because Cambodian "go-betweens" were traditionally well-respected elders or monks of the community. SK's failure to settle the dispute between the two BS groups simply reinforced the feelings of some older members that "being young in that role doesn't work."

However, the "go-between" role in the inter-ethnic sphere was new and therefore not well-defined. Here the youthfulness of the executive leaders was less of an issue. On the contrary, their leadership was welcomed because of their fluency in English and their experience relating to the dominant community. Nevertheless, on certain occasions -such as their failure to help the new BS group acquire nonprofit status - the executive leaders were criticized for their youth and inexperience.

Establishing Relations with the Dominant Community

While all SK members understood the need to develop relationships with their ethnic community, younger members and middle-persons realized that SK needed to build its outside resources and capabilities as well. The elders having less contact with the dominant community did not see this task as important. For SK to establish relations with the dominant community, this meant learning the larger social service system and the subculture of service providers; and breaking barriers erected by the dominant community when confronted by cultural difference.

Learning the Subculture of Service Providers

As the most visible SK representative, the Director had to quickly learn the service provider profession, while more slowly coming to learn and understand its subculture. For example, he substituted his casual student attire for a more professional look after an older board member advised him of the importance of appearance. He was most comfortable with the MAA providers because of frequent interaction with them during statewide trainings and meetings sponsored by ORI. At the time of this writing, he had expanded his contacts to area providers in meetings, workshops, and grant sessions and therefore was learning more about the subculture.

In addition to the director, half of SK's board (mostly younger members) had worked for service agencies and were also familiar with aspects of the subculture. Some, including the board president, accompanied the director to statewide training and meetings. A few were familiar because of volunteer activities in the community. Nevertheless, learning the nuances of the service provider subculture was a constant learning experience for them.

Developing Interorganizational Relations

SK members felt its survival depended on their ability to tap outside funding. The director was active in this matter and attended meetings with other agencies. ORI sponsorship provided the board members and him a chance to connect with other MAAs. In addition, other agencies asked SK to participate in future collaborative projects. The director was enthusiastic and excited about this part of the job: meeting new people, learning about the larger system, representing SK to the outside community.

Board members' affiliations could also be a source of connection that enhanced non-profit organizations. This was something that SK members had not fully comprehended or exploited. Most members of the board were employed either by the schools they attended or by the voluntary agencies which resettled them. Because most were not in a position

of power, they were unable to provide to SK the status and resources normally accorded to people in powerful positions.

Fostering Relations with the Dominant Community

As gatekeepers for their ethnic community, one board member captured the essence of their role: "SK has to educate the outside community about our culture and people and we have to represent our people's voice."

SK fostered relations with the dominant community in several ways. The New Year holiday provided an opportunity to invite the general public. Non-Cambodians joined the celebration, most indirectly connected with the community either as host families, service agencies, or individual friends. Nonetheless, the event gave outsiders a glimpse of the Cambodian culture. SK members hoped to see more of these celebrations as a way to foster good relations with the dominant community.

SK also discovered the media as a way to promote cultural awareness and to educate the public about the Cambodian community. A videotape of a Buddhist celebration, an effort by an American volunteer and the Executive Director, was shown on a local television station. Several articles also appeared in local newspapers. SK cooperated with reporters by providing information about the community and access to individuals to be interviewed. While the articles provided free publicity about SK and the community,

some younger members complained that they focused on negative aspects of the community and contained distorted and inaccurate facts.

One particular article featuring the tenant organizing effort in an apartment complex infuriated the executive director. He claimed that he was misquoted and the article made it appear that SK was involved in organizing the Cambodians in the complex. As a result, the apartment manager threatened to evict SK from the complex. The executive director, fearing the consequences, refused to become involved. To make amends, he reassured the manager that he was not organizing the tenants and that SK's office was not being used for tenant meetings. This was one instance where SK did not want an adversarial relationship with a member of the dominant community. Therefore, it chose not to advocate for a segment of its community.

Defining Relations with the Dominant Community

Just as SK members interpreted symbols, assumed new roles, and created images in order to define the organization and its relation to the Cambodian community, so did they also need to define SK's relationship to the dominant community. This meant establishing themselves with the human service system and mainstream community as representatives of their ethnic community. They had to enter the world of the human service system and learn its

subculture, not in their familiar role as clients, but in the unfamiliar role as equals and providers.

As a result of being welfare recipients and bilingual workers in voluntary agencies, SK members were familiar with aspects of the human service system subculture. But as they entered the world of nonprofit organizations as stakeholders in their own ethnic organization rather than as employees or clients, they had to learn a new perspective on this subculture. Assuming this reversed role was a new experience for all of them.

For the executive leaders, learning the provider subculture meant conforming to certain appearance, behavior, and value expectations of the dominant culture. They had to learn the rituals, codes, and customs, as well as conduct themselves according to acceptable subculture norms. Complying with dress codes and learning rituals like attending workshops were easier than changing more deeply-held behaviors and values. Here, cultural differences in values often became salient in contributing to members' inner conflict/outer appearance. The difference in time-consciousness between the two cultures illustrates this point.

While time is treated as precise and crucial in the dominant culture, Cambodians have a more casual approach. They tend to apportion their time according to what needs attending to for each day rather than planning activities in advance. Their experience during the civil war and in camp

life reinforced this attitude. As one member said, "When I am in camp, I don't think about tomorrow. I live only for the moment."

The executive director, being younger and more acculturated, was more attuned to western time-consciousness, such as promptness in attending meetings. However, this did not extend to other areas such as planning events and the organization's future. He found it difficult to adapt the dominant culture's thinking that "time can be planned and controlled." The board members also had trouble with this western mind-set. Obviously, the difference in time-consciousness had many implications for how SK would function in the new culture. This was just one of many cultural differences highlighted as SK developed its relationship to other organizations.

In the same way SK had to reverse its subordinate role to learn the human service subculture, it had to reverse it in order to define its new relationship with dominant human service organizations. SK leaders had to present their ethnic organization to these agencies as being a provider rather than a client or a source of workers. Though this required a new stance on building the relationship, nevertheless, the dictates of patron-client relations still had a pervasive influence. Except for a few younger members, there was still a general feeling among the SK board and staff of indebtedness, of living only through the benevolence of the host country, service agencies, and

sponsors. One member captured the sentiment, saying: "We will always be guests in this country."

In the context of the nonprofit world, funders such as foundations, ORI, other government agencies, and other organizations and individuals providing resources and support, could be seen as patrons. Therefore, any relationship with them would demand, as consistent with traditional Cambodian roles, honor, respect, and obedience from the client. In return, these patrons would provide resources needed to support the organization. For example, in the first years of funding, SK's relationship with ORI had a strong element of patron-client interaction. The executive director was very responsive to the demands of ORI, attending statewide events and meetings. His sense of obligation became a contentious issue with his fellow Cambodians at one point, when he chose to attend an ORI-sponsored workshop instead of helping with the Cambodian New Year preparation.

The executive director readily admitted that relating to organizations seemed easier than working with his own board. Just as traditional social hierarchy allowed him to easily relate to board elders but not to the less-traditional younger members, so it provided him with a cultural road map on how to relate to these organizations. Though his interaction with these organizations was often superficial, as he and others continued to have interaction

with mainstream organizations, cross-cultural differences continued to be important factors in the relationship.

As SK built relationships with mainstream organizations, it also was defining its contact with the dominant community-at-large. Considered by SK members and outsiders as the gatekeeper of the Cambodian community, SK became, in Cambodian terms, the patron to their own people. Attached to this image, as elaborated earlier was also the expectation that SK would be guardian and advocate for the community's interests. However, Sk's general approach to this role with the outside community was complacent, cooperative, and non-confrontational. This approach was consistent with traditional ways of avoiding confrontation, and reflected the patron-client attitude of "deference and consideration."

This description of generative themes illustrates that MAAs go through a process of cross-cultural adaptation. SK's encounter with conflicting elements of the old and the new cultures influences the way its members created and shaped their ethnic organization. The contrast in cultural assumptions and values about worldview, social relations, and self-perception creates cultural disruption and disharmony. As the members respond to tension and conflict, their reactions are articulated through various coping and adaptive mechanisms, including the cross-cultural processes themselves. This chapter has outlined these processes from the perspective of SK's experiences and the researcher's

interpretation of those experiences. Drawing from the organization's reactions to acculturation and its effects, we need to make "sense of the whole" by providing a synthesis in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

A SYNTHESIS

The processes of cross-cultural adaptation described in the previous chapter reflected the various reactions and the effects of those reactions to conflicting elements of the old and new cultures. The intent of this chapter is to provide a synthesis of the findings in two ways. First, a selective synthesis is discussed and interpreted as a cumulative outcome of cross-cultural adaptation. Then, a conceptual framework attempts to integrate the differing aspects of cross-cultural adaptation as discussed in the study.

Cross-Cultural Adaptation: A Selective Synthesis

Anthropologists contend that a culture undergoing acculturation has the capacity to selectively screen what elements to accept and reject of the new culture (SSRC, 1954). The outcome is a blending and synthesizing of intercultural elements. We explore this dimension in three parts by a) describing three critical incidents in the organizations; b) sharing examples of selective process and reactions to these incidents (SK's point of view); and c) interpreting the process of selective synthesis (researcher's analysis).

Critical Incidents

At points during SK's development, the organization was preoccupied with major issues. During the critical incidents, SK members were consumed with conflict resolution. Each incident provides a dramatic glimpse into the group members' dynamics and behavior resulting from organizational conflicts.

Critical Incident One: A Conflict Among Members about SK's Mediating Role. This critical incident emerged from a conflict situation within the Cambodian community in which SK became involved. The conflict started when a group of community elders broke away from the original BS group that was building a temple. This temple project had been in discussion and planning for many years. Meanwhile, a Buddhist monk was housed in a temporary temple in a local apartment complex. All this time, however, the Cambodian community in the valley had been raising funds for the construction of the permanent temple. While a large amount of money had been raised by the community, building the temple was still at a very early stage. This caused disappointment and frustration among community members who had been actively involved in fundraising. From this disgruntled group, a new BS emerged for the purpose of building a less expensive temple which would be closer to town. They felt that the other temple would take a long

time and the temporary temple in an apartment was not good enough.

SK did not know whether it should assume a role to mediate between these two BS groups. SK members were split on this issue. Some felt that SK had the responsibility; others wanted SK to separate itself from the BS groups. However, the executive leaders were drawn into the conflict after the monk failed to smooth differences between the two groups. The new BS group, whose leaders were on the SK board, encouraged SK to assume a mediating role and to help the new BS obtain a nonprofit status.

Critical Incident Two: A Conflict Between Generations About Board Leadership. This critical incident was between an older Cambodian and the emerging young leaders of SK. It occurred in the first year of the ORI grant when a new regional board had to be formed. The selection of the board was done by a handful of the original local board. Subsequently, a meeting was held to elect the president and other officers of the board. The younger leaders, unhappy with the way the board and president were selected, felt that the board had been picked by a few and that the selected president, an older Cambodian, had "engineered" his own election. Hence, the more open, democratic process that they wanted to use had already been undermined by the traditional autocratic way.

A lot of deliberation and agonizing among the young leaders occurred over what to do. Attempts were made to talk to the newly-appointed president privately, but this never materialized. After two months, the younger group decided to make the issue public. At a community meeting, attended by the monk and elders, they confronted the two older leaders from the earlier board, one of whom was the new president.

The meeting was largely a dialogue between the younger leaders and the two older ones, with the monk and other elders observing without participating. Both sides shared explanations and perceptions of the issue. After much discussion, no specific resolution was made except to hold another meeting. However, the older leaders did not show up at the next meeting and the issue was apparently forgotten. So the young leaders put together a new board through community representation and selection.

Critical Incident Three: A Conflict Between SK Members and an American About Publication Ownership. In this critical incident, the conflict was between the SK members and an American married to a Cambodian woman from the community. At stake was the ownership of a document written and submitted by the American but funded under the auspices of the organization. The board and executive director wanted to exercise their legal right to supervise the project and claim the publishing rights to written products;

the American claimed it as his project and his book, and claimed that SK was only the fiscal agent. He claimed that this was the agreement he made with the original local SK board.

This case presented difficulties for the executive director and the board president. The executive director asserted SK's legal rights to the project and re-emphasized that the non-Cambodian was a hired staff. He asserted his position in discussing this with the non-Cambodian project coordinator, the board president, and the board. On the other hand, the board president while agreeing in principle to SK's legal ownership, leaned more toward compromise. He negotiated an agreement where SK retained legal rights to the project, the American could have the publishing rights to the book. He then presented this compromised agreement to the board, rather than having the board meet with the person and let the group decide. He said he was trying "to save face" Most members were not pleased with the outcome. While this issue was discussed many times in board meetings, the final compromise, they felt, was made solely by the president.

These critical incidents happened over a long period of time. They are good examples of social situations where SK had to find resolutions to difficult issues. We will refer, on occasion, to these incidents to show how the organization selectively blended and integrated the old and new cultures.

Selecting and Blending Cultures

Taken all together, SK's cross-cultural adaptation resulted in the organization selecting, modifying, and blending two cultures by rejecting aspects of the old traditions and accepting aspects of the new culture.

Rejecting Old and Accepting New Cultures. Leadership is the most visible issue where SK members clearly demonstrated rejecting an old tradition. On this issue, SK members unanimously rejected the traditional autocratic, political leader. Younger members, middle-persons, and elders alike were in agreement that their community did not need leadership qualities associated with political leaders in Cambodia. When asked, however, what qualities an effective leader for the community should have, each group emphasized different things:

> Elders: patient, faithful, self-sacrificing, sympathetic, mentally mature, knowledgeable about the culture; understands, has experience working with, and is effective in the community.
>
> Middle-persons: educated, confident, older; possesses problem-solving and fundraising skills, has worked with agencies; experienced and practiced in real situations; outspoken but effective; given legitimate authority.
>
> The young: democratic, non-political, humble, friendly, no self-interest, works for interest and benefit of community, educated, progressive.

Clearly, the elders favored a person possessing traditional Cambodian virtues and knowledge about the culture and the community. The middle-persons preferred someone with more professional skills, experience, and competence in working with the outside. Younger members, on the other hand, stressed a leader embracing democratic ideals and discarding political ambition.

Most Cambodians praised the freedom and democratic values of American culture and would prefer to incorporate these qualities in their own culture and organization. The elders, to a certain extent the middle-persons, equivocally agreed that having democratic practices is better than going back to traditional autocratic ways. The young organizers of SK, from the beginning, tried to work under democratic principles. For example, during the earlier phase of SK's expansion, a handful of the previous board members selected a new board and a new president. This particular case is described in detail in Chapter 4 as critical incident two, but suffice it to say that the younger organizers were angry and challenged the older members. In challenging traditional way of doing things, they caused a rift with few older members of the community.

The younger group decided to select the board through community election to show the people how to select their own representatives with the support of SK elders. Thus, each community selected its own representatives. However, democratic processes takes time and effort. At this

writing, SK members questioned whether this same democratic process of board selection would be followed because of the amount of time it requires for this process.

A democratic style of decision-making, that is, by the group as opposed to the more traditional way of by a single leader, was preferred by nearly all SK members. One middle-person captured the group's preference: "SK has to combine and exchange ideas and we cannot absolutely get only one idea from the people. We should throw away the tradition to say that every decision must be made by a few on the top....it is not a good idea." While the board preferred a group decision-making process, they complained that in practice it does not happen. For example, as discussed earlier, most felt the executive leaders made decisions on occasion without the input of the board.

Blending and Integrating the Old and the New. The organization's members were realistic when asked whether they should adapt American ways to operate SK. Everyone realized, elders included, that "an SK in the U.S." could not be run as if "the SK [was] in Cambodia." In general, they agreed that they needed to tailor their approach to the situation. Nearly all preferred a strategy of compromise around these issues:

> An elder's perception of a general strategy:
> "We should be in the middle. We should do Cambodian way, but sometimes, we should do in American way. We have to look into our community to find out what our

people need, then we will do either in Cambodian or American way to help them with respecting and according to American law. Whatever we can do in our Cambodian way without breaking the law, we should do."

A younger member commenting on the benefit of an intergenerational board: "That's why the younger generation learn from the old, of course we experience the new system in this country. A lot of us don't know what is the Cambodian system so they are educating us, the younger generation and we are educating them, the older generation. So you put young and old together. We the younger generation can deal with outside the agency and the system where the older generation can be dealing with the community."

A middle-person advocating for group decision-making: "We can adapt American way only democracy process. We have to combine....this is the American way. But the only one thing that the Cambodian people must keep is to pay respect to the older people and to pay respect to the top official. It does not mean when we turn into democracy that we must demonstrate like impolite or acquiesce...we can say no to the older people but appropriately. We cannot come out inappropriate, it is not democratic."

While the members realized that compromise was the best strategy, they struggled to find ways to blend the old and the new. Various ideas were developed and discussed; a few were implemented.

The kind of leadership members wanted was a salient issue that came up in informal conversations and interviews. The board wanted SK's executive leaders to possess qualities making them responsive to the traditional Cambodian community while still possessing skills that enabled them to access the American system. However, most SK members realized such people would be difficult to find. One elder suggested ways of combining talents of different generations:

> In order to improve, we need the mix the old and the young. To be president, we need an older person who is over 40 because they understand Cambodia. The young, they grew up in refugee camp, they do not understand the culture. If they do not understand the community, how can they ran an organization? But, we need the young because they know the law. If the president knows the community and the director can work with the outside agencies, both people can work together, they can understand and share to work together to help the community.

The struggle to compromise, to blend cultures is most evident in how the organization dealt with the critical incidents two and three described in Chapter 4. Each conflict was handled differently. Critical incident two between the younger leaders and an older Cambodian dealt with the issue of board leadership. Here the young openly confronted the issue in a public meeting much to the dismay of the older members involved, after a long period of not dealing with the conflict.

Critical incident three between SK and an American was handled somewhat differently on two levels. On one level, the executive director stood firm and claimed SK's legal rights to the project with the American, the board president, and the board. But, on another level, the board president while agreeing with the legal issue did not want the board to confront the American. He directly negotiated an agreement with the American without the board's prior approval. This was his attempt to avoid open confrontation and "save face" for the American. But, most of the board were unhappy with his action.

There were usually some members who were displeased with how these conflicts were handled and the exact form the compromise took. The older members would prefer to first try to handle conflicts delicately in the Cambodian manner and use open confrontation as a last resort. But as one member explained: "dealing with conflict the Cambodian way is usually not to deal with it." Or an elder explained: "it has to be done in a quiet way so people do not lose face." Yet others, like the middle-persons, felt the way to success was to compromise, to settle for a mixture of Cambodian and American traditions and styles.

SK's encounter with conflicting elements of the old and the new cultures influenced the way the members created and shaped their ethnic organization. As SK members respond to these conflicts, their reactions described earlier resulting in selective strategies. However, two questions are yet to be addressed to make sense of their reactions. Why did the ethnic board and staff react the way they did? What effects resulted from their reactions? The next section provides analysis and interpretation of these reactions while responding to the questions.

Synthesizing Intercultural Elements

SK had been selecting, blending, and creating ways to synthesize conflicting elements of the old traditions and the new culture. The issue of conflict resolution provides

a striking example of the struggle to synthesize two divergent cultural elements. This is an area where restructuring the conventional Cambodian ways of resolving conflicts was arduous and unpleasant.

First, we need to elaborate on the marked contrast between the two cultures in how to respond to conflicts. Cambodian culture dictates avoidance of conflict, the dominant culture encourages direct confrontation. These opposing approaches created their own intercultural conflict for SK: how did SK respond to a conflict without compromising either appropriate cultural behavior or what was best for the organization? This was perhaps one of SK's most difficult and persistent struggles in its acculturation process. However, it's exactly this type of conflict that will bring about a synthesis.

Two conflicts cited earlier can illustrate the way SK members, experiencing a clash of cultures, handled the dilemma. For example, in critical incident one, younger members chose the dominant cultural norm by using public confrontation to resolve conflict. Nevertheless, this was done only after much deliberation about the action to be taken and only after attempts to resolve the conflict in the traditional way had failed. This was an attempt by the younger members to synthesize the ethnic preference of avoidance and the dominant norm of confrontation.

Critical incident two, on the other hand, was resolved differently. The board leader sought a more traditional

mode of conflict resolution by avoiding open confrontation between an American and the board. A solution was negotiated between him and the other party without the board's involvement. Interestingly enough, though this approach followed a more traditional mode of resolution, some board members were not happy about the way it was conducted. They complained, ironically, it was done "without the group's input." This outcome suggests that the members were unable to combine the expected norm of two cultures in the resolution.

In summary, reactions of SK's Cambodian board and staff to intercultural conflict set in motion coping and adapting strategies to adjust into the nonprofit environment. Intercultural conflict occurs when the old and new cultures diametrically oppose each other. In this case, the old culture (non-western) sees man as living in harmony with nature, oriented toward the extended family, non-dynamic, past-oriented, passive, and good. The new culture (western) views man as trying to control nature, born evil, future-oriented, dynamic, individualistic, and aggressive. This difference in value systems placed SK members in situations of extreme cultural conflict resulting in questioning their own cultural values and identity. This cultural conflict was manifested in SK's Cambodian board and staff as they constructed an ethnic organization in their own image. For SK to survive, it had to adapt to its environment as most organizations do. The contention is that SK, like other MAS

(ethnic organizations), was undergoing (and at the time of this writing is still undergoing) a process of cross-cultural adaptation. How do we make sense of such a complex and dynamic phenomenon with a network of interrelated concepts and dimensions? The next section attempts to synthesize the "many parts into a whole."

Toward A Conceptual Framework

An organizing framework is proposed specifying various dimensions in the process of cross-cultural adaptation (CCA). The dimensions respond to these questions. Who are the organizational actors? What are the intercultural processes? What are the outcomes of intercultural conflicts? What are the environmental parameters in the process of CCA? Some possible relationships between these dimensions are suggested. This framework should not be considered as a theoretical model but rather, an exploratory concept in understanding the complex dynamics of CCA.

The conceptual framework of CCA in Figure 4 presents three dimensions which include the acculturation of organizational members, the intercultural processes: cause, reactions and effects, outcome, and the sociocultural environment. Briefly, each dimension is described as revealed and explored in the study.

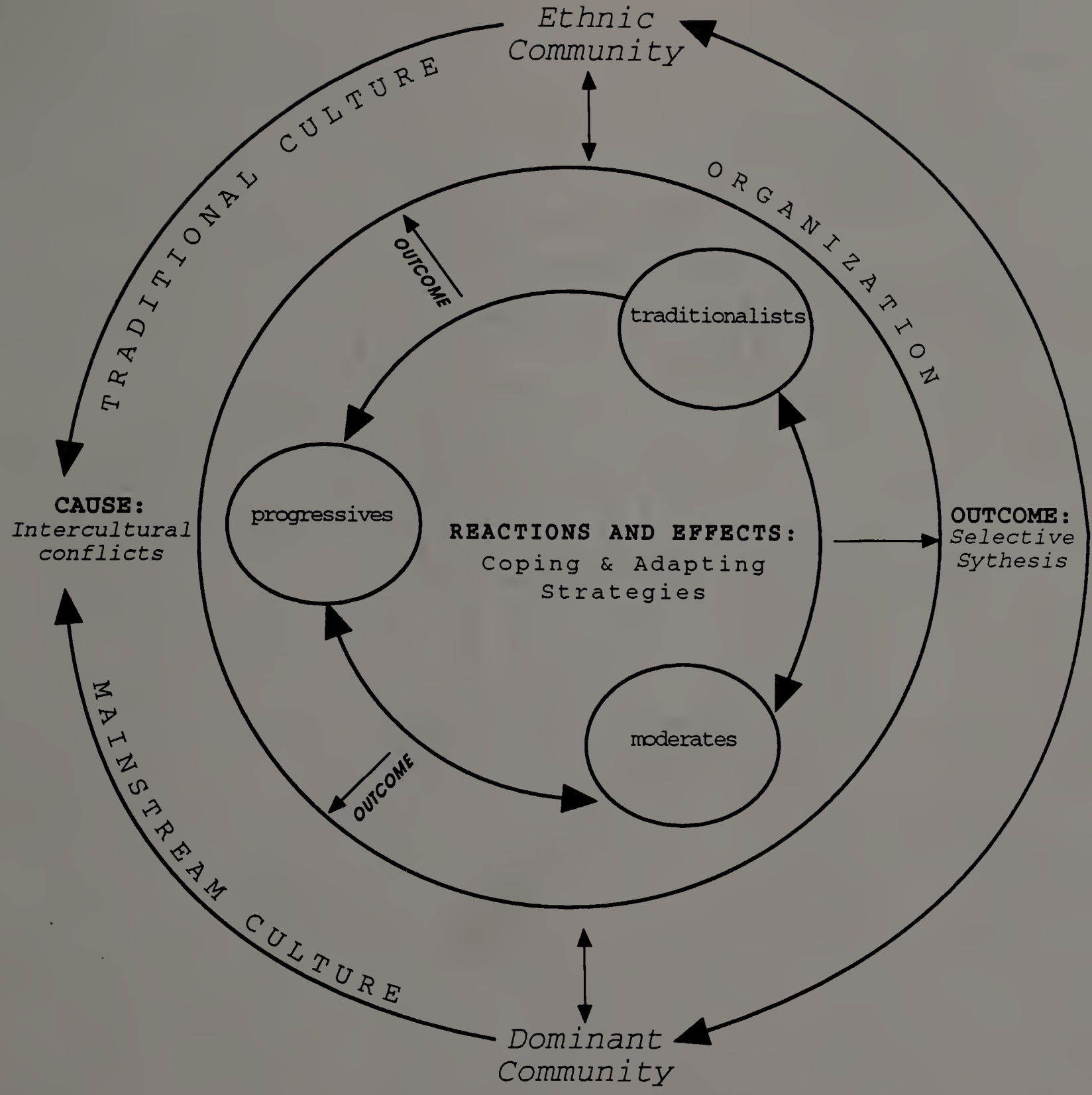

Figure 4

A Conceptual Framework: Dimensions of a Cross-Culture Adaptation of MAAs

Acculturation of Organizational Members

CCA can only be understood in the context of organizational members interacting in the various intercultural processes. SK's members have diverse social background and experience in their home culture, refugee camps, and in their encounter with the American culture. This social diversity is an important factor to take into account. Background characteristics of social class, years of formal education, employment skills, and cultural transition in the camps prior to arrival in the U.S. all influence an individual's adjustment to a new culture. Demographic variables such as age, sex, socio-economic class are equally important in the psychocultural adjustment of individuals.

As newcomers to the American culture, SK's members each experienced intercultural conflicts. Their response to these conflicts was influenced by the extent they were entrenched in the ethnic culture, the degree they were exposed to the dominant culture, and the stage of their own ethnic identity. Taken collectively, each member's individual adaptation and adjustment had a cumulative effect on CCA.

At a group level, SK members actually formed interest groups according to their degree of acculturation and their orientation regarding the dilemma of assimilating or maintaining ethnic identity. These interest groups

influenced the various intercultural elements and processes of CCA. Drawn from this study, three interest groups are identified based on their adaptive tendencies and orientation in mediating between two opposing cultures. These groups are the traditionalists (elders), the moderates (middle-persons), and the progressives (the young).

Traditionalists. Older and less educated than the other groups, the traditionalists had more difficulties adjusting to the new culture. Their system of values, beliefs, and norms was deeply rooted in the Cambodian culture, and their social interaction was mostly within the confines of the ethnic community. Because they were also leaders in the Buddhist Society, traditionalists were well-respected by other community elders. Both younger groups considered their participation in the organization essential because they had much to contribute about the ethnic culture and the community. However, they were also viewed, particularly by the progressives, as "unable to keep up" or "out of step" with the development of the organization. As discussed in the previous chapter, traditionalists were in extreme confusion with the purpose and function of an organization like SK in the new culture.

Moderates. Older than the progressives and having years of formal education in Cambodia, moderates had strong ties to the traditional culture. As active participants in

higher education, they were also exposed to and familiar with the mainstream culture. However, they seemed to know where they stand in the new culture and were able to reconcile their own intercultural conflicts. As a result, they were good "cultural mediators" between the traditionalists and the progressives. They would consider accepting some norms of the new culture as long as the basic cultural values such as respect for elders, religion, and language were not compromised. The moderates preferred to see the organization move forward by seeking the middle ground.

Progressives. This group was mostly composed of younger members of SK who had attended mainstream educational institutions since arrival in the U.S. They had been more exposed to the new culture and were more fluent in English than others. While they had a short history living in the home culture, their primary connections were still within the ethnic community. Nonetheless, their contemporary experience in the new culture had influenced their values, beliefs, and norms. Unable to resolve their own intercultural conflicts, progressives vacillate between the old and the new cultures. However, they were liberals and advocated for change, particularly to achieve organization viability. Their orientation leaned toward bringing the organization into step with democratic principles of the new culture.

Of the three interest groups, the progressives dominated because they had the largest number (five board members, two staff). The traditionalists and the moderates had equal number of members (three board members each). Obviously, the progressives could influence both the direction and pace of SK's process of cross-cultural adaptation.

Intercultural Processes

Intercultural processes involve the interrelated elements of cause (intercultural conflicts), reactions and effects (coping & adapting strategies), and outcome (selective synthesis).

Cause. It is well known that when any group comes in contact with a culture totally different from their own, they are bound to experience intercultural conflicts. Similarly, CCA is a result of intercultural conflicts stemming from culturally disparate forces that an ethnic organization undergoes in pursuit of its development. There were many instances when SK experienced intercultural conflicts. One example was the avoidance behavior of the traditional culture in contrast to the confrontive behavior of the dominant culture in resolving conflicts. Another was the difference in defining social relations between the more formal, well-defined social hierarchy of the Cambodian

culture and the less formal, more democratic patterns of the American culture.

As this study reveals, the SK Cambodian members were going through the experience of dealing with the dilemma responding to issues of cultural convergence or divergence, acceptance of or resistance to cultural change. Paradoxically, intercultural conflicts became the root cause as well as one of the driving forces to growth and development of the organization.

Reactions and Effects. Responding to intercultural conflicts, ethnic organizations react in various ways. These reactions result in various effects which eventually result in coping and adaptive strategies. This intercultural process of reaction and effect form the dynamic core of CCA and eventually determine its outcome. These reactions and effects, described in detail in Chapters 5, are delineated in Figure 5. Reactions are primarily described from the perspective of SK members; effects are the interpretations of the members' reactions linked to intercultural conflicts.

Reactions	Effects
Learning New Concepts	Interpreting Symbols
Understanding New Roles	Making Roles
Negotiating Social Relations	Restructuring Social Arrangements
Maintaining Ethnic Identity	Reshaping Ethnic Identity
Developing Relations with the Ethnic Community	Creating Images in the Ethnic Community
Establishing Relations with the Dominant Community	Defining Relations with the Dominant Community

Figure 5

Coping and Adapting Strategies

As described in Chapter 5, SK's reactions to intercultural conflicts included learning new concepts, understanding new roles, negotiating social relations, maintaining ethnic identity, and developing relations. For example, negotiating social relations meant the organization grappled with issues between generations and within generations. The intergenerational schism while creating tension produced behavioral adjustment between and among generations in the organization. Members had to find ways to negotiate new social relations. The traditional older-

younger and boss-worker hierarchy was rearranged and redefined. The young had to learn to work together as executive leaders and the elders had to accept the young's leadership role.

Maintaining ethnic identity required addressing two issues: that of younger members caught between cultures and that of inclusive board membership. The identity crisis of "being Cambodian-American" among younger members was manifested in their behavior and affected group dynamics. In contrast, the strong desire to have all Cambodians on the board strengthened SK's ethnic identity. SK's ability to maintain ethnic identity was also influenced by its relationship with the ethnic community. However, relating to the ethnic community meant dealing with intraethnic conflicts.

The effects corresponding to the reactive processes are interpreting symbols, making roles, restructuring social arrangements, reshaping ethnic identity, creating images, and defining relations. All these are linked to conflicting elements of the disparate cultures. Coping and adaptive processes occur because either old traditional norms and values no longer apply or assimilative forces of the dominant culture overwhelm the traditional one. For example, negotiating social relations between and among generations (a reaction) results in restructuring the social arrangements (an effect), because the traditional social structure is no longer viable in the new cultural setting.

Maintaining ethnic identity (reaction) is another example where reshaping ethnic identity (effect) occurs because the dominant culture's ascription of "minority" ethnic group has replaced the Cambodians' own sense of identity with their home culture.

Outcome. The outcome of this alternating feed-back system of reactions and effects is the selective syntheses of conflicting elements of two disparate cultures presented in the earlier section of this chapter. In a continuing process, ethnic members reject and modify old traditions and values while accepting and blending new cultural elements. Through selective syntheses, newcomer ethnic organizations create and transform new images, symbols, structures, and norms that transcend the old and the new cultures.

Earlier in this chapter, examples were provided for how SK rejected and blended the old and new cultures. For instance, SK members rejected the traditional, autocratic type of leadership. Most, especially the younger members, preferred to embrace democratic values and practices in the organization. Resolving conflicts was the most visible area where SK responded to the clash of cultures by synthesizing the ethnic preference of avoidance and the dominant norm of confrontation.

Sociocultural Environment

CCA does not occur in a vacuum within the parameter of organizations. The external environment is a significant factor impacting the intercultural process. Specifically, the sociocultural forces of two opposing communities can influence the nature and outcome of the process, particularly at the local level. External factors beyond the local boundary of the community such as immigration and funding can also be influential.

The two opposing sociocultural community systems are the ethnic community and the external dominant community. The organization has to function and operate responding to the ethnocentric forces of the ethnic community while at the same time responding to the assimilative forces of the dominant sociocultural system. Here the intercultural processes of establishing, developing, and defining relations, and creating images are being played out while SK interacts with both communities. While the focus of this research is the acculturation of ethnic organizations, we have to keep in mind that there are reciprocal responses by the sociocultural system not fully explored in the research.

Ethnic Community. The general profile of the ethnic community, including demographic, social characteristics, and psychocultural adjustment, determines the nature and scope of the organization. The organization's legitimacy,

sponsorship, membership, and activities are sanctioned by the ethnic community. If the ethnic organization is truly representative of the community, it usually mirrors aspects of the sociocultural dynamics of the community. So far, SK seemed to reflect what was going on in the community. The organization successfully involved various social groups although women were minimally represented. SK interacted closely with the community, particularly with the BS groups. Here the interaction with the BS groups seemed to have a pervasive influence in the intercultural processes of the organization. Because SK was at an early stage, the organizational members were painstakingly cautious in creating images to and defining relations with their own community. How these processes evolve depends on the two-way influencing forces of SK to the ethnic community and ethnic community to SK. To what extent will the organization be: representative of their ethnic community, clinging to their ethnic roots, encouraging member participation, and responsive to community needs? Conversely, to what extent will the ethnic community sponsor, sanction, and support the organization?

Dominant Community. The assimilative forces of the white American culture, particularly the mainstream non-profit institutions, undoubtedly also impact on the process of CCA. Again, this occurs in a two way pattern of influence. By joining the non-profit world, a newcomer

ethnic organizations is expected to undergo some degree of structural and cultural assimilation. The mainstream organizations are to accept membership of ethnic organizations into the non-profit world. Conversely, the ethnic organizations are expected to conform to the human service subculture since performance is generally measured against the dominant norm.

Because they are marginalized, newcomer ethnic organizations are largely dependent on the dominant community for resources. Access to those resources depends on how well they assimilate to the western standard of viability, effectiveness, and efficiency. They are expected to develop or to be like other well-established mainstream nonprofits who have a system to support them.

SK, as a newly established nonprofit, was just beginning to establish and develop relations with the dominant community. This particular intercultural process was at the infancy stage. Structural assimilation had taken place but only within the confines of the human service organizations such as ORI, VOLAGs, and other organizations interested in serving ethnic communities. Cultural assimilation to the non-profit subculture, on the other hand, was limited. However, as SK begins to seek outside funding, it would increasingly have to comply with dominant institutions. It would be easy to predict that assimilative forces will be extremely strong during the intercultural process of establishing and defining relations with the

dominant community. As an ethnic organization, SK would always be confronted with the dilemma of resisting or accepting assimilation.

The elements of each dimension and between dimensions are interrelated and intricately intertwined. The dynamics of CCA occur at the individual, group, and organizational levels, in the context of the sociocultural environment of the ethnic organization. The framework should not be seen as a linear cause-effect process but more of a cyclical, multidimensional, multilevel feedback loop pattern. CCA's direction and dynamics occur at all levels and among and between dimensions in a continuous process. In summary, the conceptual framework of CCA proposed here is rather complex and intricate. It needs further investigation, exploration, and refinement.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study began with the premise that MAAs, a type of newcomer ethnic organization, are experiencing difficulty adjusting to the dominant model of organization. It is well accepted that refugee and immigrant groups experience acculturation in their new environment, but it is less recognized that the MAAs themselves go through a similar process. It is also well understood that MAAs are expected to govern themselves using standards established by the dominant culture, but less acknowledged that this requires them to conform to the values and norms of the dominant culture. This case study has argued that both cross-cultural adaptation and conforming to the dominant standard of formal organizations occur in MAAs, and create tensions and conflicts among indigenous newcomer members.

In previous chapters, we explored the various dimensions of cross-cultural adaptation in the organizational context of a Cambodian MAA. We examined the nature of acculturation, differing intercultural processes, and interaction with the sociocultural environment. However, this cross-cultural study reveals findings which warrant further exploration. This last chapter highlights these findings in two ways. First, it offers conclusions drawn from the dissertation and their implications for the

field of organizational studies. Second, it suggests a number of implications for research, practice, and policy.

Conclusions

This case study illuminates many facets of newcomer ethnic organizations during their adjustment to a new culture. Several findings also emerge from this investigation which underscore the complexity and uniqueness of this social phenomenon, and their significance for the field of organizational studies. What are these findings? How do they inform the discipline of organizational behavior and development? What are the cross-cultural elements found in this case study? In response to these questions, this section summarizes six conclusions about the cross-cultural dimensions of MAAs as newcomer ethnic organization.

Interrelated Concepts of Culture and Acculturation

The interdependent concepts of culture and acculturation are vital to understanding the dynamics and behavior of MAAs. As organizations represented and governed by newcomers, MAAs reflect an ethnic group's cultural system. This culture, as described earlier, consists of shared knowledge, values, beliefs, customs, language, and behavior manifested in institutions of family, religion, and organizations (Spindler, 1977). SK, the MAA in this study,

was totally governed and managed by indigenous leaders. Consequently, it was influenced by the values, norms, and behavior of Cambodian culture, as well as reflected the Cambodians' common ethnic identity and heritage.

However, SK and its indigenous members were located not in their home country but in a host country. Because MAAs are an American innovation rather than indigenous to Cambodia, they are new and unfamiliar structures for newcomers to create and develop. According to Spindler, "innovative configurations of ideas, when accepted by the majority of persons in a culture or subculture, constitute culture change and may be expressed in physical artifacts or social inventions" (1977:13). As newcomers, the Cambodians experienced increasing acculturation as they become exposed to new ideas, structures, institutions, and social situations. Once they accept the idea of an MAA, acculturation occurred in the context of constructing an unfamiliar form of "social invention".

The interrelated concepts of culture and acculturation are the underlying themes in the process of cross-cultural adaptation of MAAs. The dynamics and behavior of these organizations can only be understood if we know what culture is and how cultures change. This organizational study, therefore, emphasizes the notion of a cultural system in the continuous process of change, a change which represents "a shift from one sort of change to another" (SSRC, 1954:984). The concepts of culture and acculturation provide the basis

for viewing MAAs as organizations embedded in cultural and social systems.

Embedded in Larger Contexts

Brown contends that "organizations are embedded in larger contexts" (1984:16). As explored in this study, SK had to contend with the conflicting cultures of Cambodian and American (cultural system) while simultaneously interfacing with its social environment (social system). MAAs are embedded in the larger context of social and cultural systems. As shown in this case study, the cross-cultural adaptation of MAAs can be seen from these two interrelated dimensions.

The first dimension is the organization's interactions with cultural and subcultural systems at various intersections during different periods in time. These cross-cultural interactions result in conflicts between differing elements of these systems. At the societal level, elements of the traditional Cambodian culture are in extreme conflict with the dominant American culture of the adopted homeland. Spiro views this intercultural contact where "the culture of the immigrant group is threatened by that of a numerically and politically dominant 'host' society" (1955:1241). Therefore, MAAs are influenced by and respond to this interaction between two autonomous cultural systems.

The MAA as a non-profit, community organization also operate within the human service institution, a separate subcultural system of the dominant society. Gordon refers to this system as "cultural patterns of a subgroup or type of subgroup within the national society" (1964:38). The human service institution is considered a subcultural system because it has a large network of social groups and structures with distinct cultural patterns within its boundaries. This study demonstrates how SK, as part of the human service system, had to interface with the system to be part of its subculture. As mentioned earlier, both structural and cultural assimilations to this human service subculture have occurred only to some degree.

The second dimension, influencing MAAs' patterns of cross-cultural adaptation, is their social interactions with other groups as they become part of the social fabric of America's pluralistic society. The relations with other groups and organizations both in the dominant and ethnic communities influence this process. In interacting with its sociocultural environment, SK responded to the ethnocentric forces of the ethnic community as well as the assimilative forces of the human service subculture. Because SK was relatively new, its social relations with the dominant community had not yet been well-defined. The constant struggle for survival, however, usually implies conforming to a dominant standard of viability and effectiveness. Consequently, SK and other MAAs will always be confronted

with dilemmas: maintaining or losing ethnic identity, preserving traditional ways or accepting new norms, and servicing their own ethnic community or including other ethnic groups. How these dilemmas are resolved will determine the patterns and processes of cross-cultural adaptation of MAAs as they become part of the social fabric of our society. In addition, represent to these dilemmas are also resolution of intercultural conflicts experienced in the process of acculturation.

Cross-Cultural Conflicts

Intercultural conflicts result from the differences in value, belief, and social systems between two cultures. Gudykunst (1983) contends the more divergent the cultures are, the more intercultural conflicts and tension emerge. As revealed in the study, the traditional Cambodian culture diverges from the dominant American culture in many ways. SK members experienced conflicting cultural elements in developing the organization because of the old and new cultures' contrasting worldviews. Traditional Cambodian culture (non-western) sees man as living in harmony with nature, oriented toward the extended family, past-oriented, non-dynamic, good, and passive. American culture (western) views man as trying to control nature, future-oriented, born evil, dynamic, individualistic, and aggressive.

How is the contrast in cultural assumptions and values manifested in the organization? We described in Chapter 4 some key elements of the Cambodian culture which provided explanations of MAA behavior. It is obvious that the Cambodian traditional culture often conflicts with the dominant standard of running a community-based organization. Many examples can be drawn from the results of the study. Perhaps the most revealing is the different response to organizational conflicts. The opposing approaches - avoidance in the traditional culture and direct confrontation in the dominant culture - created a constant dilemma for SK over which one to adopt.

Another area of cultural divergence is the different perceptions of the world. The western (American) worldview sees the world as physical and mechanical, predictable, and controllable. Time is future oriented and seen as linear. In contrast, the non-western (Cambodian) point of view is spiritual and organic, hence, mystically and spiritually ordered. Time is defined in the present and viewed as circular. As previously asserted, the influence of Buddhism for Cambodians is pervasive and underscores other social values. The study demonstrates how the difference in worldview can affect organizational members' attitude and behavior at work. Here SK members' casual appproach to time and informal style of work influenced their way of planning events and the organization's future. They found it

difficult to adapt the western mind-set of "planning ahead, controlling time, and meeting deadlines."

The difference in defining social relations creates another area of conflict. The dominant norm emphasizes individualism and equality, and defines roles loosely. In contrast, the traditional Cambodian pattern of social relations is characterized by collectivism. The social hierarchy is well-defined, formal, and tightly structured. We have illustrated how the traditional patron-client role influences the social interaction of SK members and how it contrasts with the democratic standard of equal social exchange.

The patterns of communication are another area of cultural dissimilarity. According to Hall's (1976) framework, while the American low-context culture prefers spoken words, the Cambodian high-context culture uses non-verbal behavior or body language. This dissimilarity can cause intercultural conflicts in organizational communication. Not only were SK members asked to engage in open communication, they had to learn to do this discussing unfamiliar documents such as articles of incorporation and grant proposal in the dominant language, English. Because the progressive, younger members preferred to speak English, the use of Khmer (Cambodian language) was being undermined. In summary, the cultural differences in perception of the world, communication patterns, social relations, and conflict resolution cause intercultural conflicts for MAAs.

As a result, cross-cultural processes occur in order to cope.

Cross-Cultural Processes as Adaptive Mechanisms

Anthropological studies have shown acculturation results in adaptive mechanisms. These mechanisms may be in the form of reactive, destructive, creative, selective, and progressive processes. This study revealed these cross-cultural patterns in SK's adaptation.

The most common pattern resulting from acculturation is cultural disruption (Chance, 1965). Acculturation creates disintegrative tendencies in a cultural system in the forms of intergenerational conflicts, factional struggles, intragroup disharmony, class disputes, and identity crisis (SSRC, 1954). Studies have repeatedly shown the existence of this type of cultural disorganization in Cambodian communities (Cohon, 1981; Scott, 1982; Strand & Woodrow, Jr., 1985; Rose, 1986). The Cambodian community in Nuhome Valley is no exception. Our case demonstrated that these forms of cultural disintegration were manifested in the MAA.

The intergenerational schism was the most pervasive form of cultural disintegration in all areas of the organization. Factional groups emerged along age lines reflecting the members' acculturation. There was a clear link between the individuals' degree of acculturation and social mobility based on educational achievement, English

competence, and employability. Gender was not as visible an issue because Cambodian women in public life are rare. Their traditional role is confined to the domestic domain. As a result, there was only one woman in the organization. Yet, her presence could be seen as token since there were pressures from the funding agency to have women on the board. This was an example of SK's "selective response" to "forced" acculturation imposed by the dominant nonprofit system. Nevertheless, the cultural tension and disorganization play a critical role in the dynamics of the organization.

Ethnic identity maintenance is another visible dilemma for the MAA and where religion is an influential factor. Boekestijn asserts that "this dilemma is the inherent tension between socio-cultural adaptation and the preservation of identity" (1988:90). In SK, it was clear that the individual members' own struggle for ethnic identity reflected the division among them on how to maintain and assert the organization's ethnic identity. Just like immigrants before them, the role of religion also cannot be undermined as a salient factor in ethnic identity (Gordon, 1964; Kennedy, 1952). SK members agreed Buddhism is at the core of being a Cambodian, but the role it could and should play in the organization was a contentious issue.

As a result of these destructive processes, creative patterns are being constructed in MAAs as members restructure social relations and reshape ethnic identity.

In this case, for example, the acculturation of the young progressives, while causing group tension, was recognized by the older members as essential for leadership. While the acceptance of younger leaders was slow to come, it is clear that the older members were willing to pass on the traditional leadership role to them. In doing so, the well-defined social hierarchy was restructured. Similarly, as SK members interpreted new symbols and roles unfamiliar to most of them, images were created, as a result, behavior developed to fit these images. For instance, the young executive leaders and the woman board member in responding to unfamiliar social roles developed images and behavior as they understood them. The MAA grappled with creating images of "patron" and "gatekeeper" for its ethnic community as part of these dynamic cross-cultural processes.

One outcome was the organization's rejection of old traditions and acceptance of new norms. The resolutions to the three critical incidents described earlier illustrate how the organization selectively blended conflicting elements of the old and new cultures. For example, SK younger members chose the dominant mode of public confrontation in one incident and the board leader sought a more traditional mode of avoiding confrontation in another incident. This selective synthesis is a continuous response to organizational tension and conflicts caused by the MAA's adaptation. As time goes on, these cultural patterns undergo transformation to different, new forms.

Acculturation at Different Levels

It is important to recognize that acculturation occurs at individual, group, and organizational levels in newcomer ethnic organizations. What occurs at these intersections has a cumulative effect on the adaptation patterns of the organization. Spindler contends that "many anthropologists have concluded that most culture change begins with individuals - with individual perceptions of a new situation or invention, the assessment of it, and then the decision to accept or reject it" (1977:7). This dimension of individual acculturation is presented in our conceptual framework. We emphasize the importance of social background, demographic characteristics, and acculturative tendencies in the psychocultural adjustment of individual members. In our analysis, we have provided many examples of individual members - a woman, a young director, or an elder - going through their own acculturation because of their roles in the organization.

The social interaction among them and with others represents cultural change at a group level. This group interaction and dynamics have been presented and interpreted throughout the study. The interaction between an elder and a young member, a female and a male member, and the director and the board president represent interpersonal relations. Similarly, members interacting as social groups (male and female), role groups (board and staff), and interest groups

(progressives, moderates, and traditionalists), were intergroup relations. It is obvious that an individual's personality and acculturation influence many of these interactions. The interpersonal and intergroup interactions influence the acculturation at the group level.

The cumulative effect of acculturation at the individual, interpersonal, and group levels defines the nature and extent of acculturation at the organizational level. At this level, the most visible processes of acculturation are the development of the organization's formal role, function, structure, and identity. Creating and developing SK's role as a "broker" and "gatekeeper", acting to preserve culture, the use of bilingual communication, and maintaining ethnic identity are examples of cultural change at this level. As we explored these patterns of acculturation, we discovered forms of creativity, selectivity, transition, and disintegration.

Cross-Cultural Adaptation's Impact on Organizational Issues

The processes of cross-cultural adaptation has an impact on organizational issues such as leadership, decision-making, group dynamics, and conflict-resolution. Clearly, the contrasting cultural assumptions between the Cambodian and American cultures underscore how these issues are addressed. How do these adaptation processes impact on SK's organizational dynamics and behavior?

The issues of leadership and decision-making as disclosed in this study are the ones through which the MAA rejected the old tradition and accepted the new culture. The dominant norms of a democratic, participatory style are clearly preferred to the traditional, autocratic style by the organization. However, while the members seemed to agree in principle about this preference, contradictions exist in some of their responses and organizational practices.

Instituting a democratic style of leadership and decision-making is difficult for several reasons. First, the intergenerational schism is a pervasive and inhibiting force in adopting new governing norm. For example, while the MAA members wanted to conform to a democratic style of leadership and decision-making, the young progressives who embraced this norm were criticized as immature and inexperienced. Despite this criticism, the younger and educated progressives proceeded to adopt this leadership style since they constituted the majority of the members and represented the executive leaders. Second, the executive leaders who viewed themselves as democratic-type leaders were just learning what this entailed. It is true that inexperience and immaturity are also considered detrimental to leadership in the dominant culture, but indigenous leaders have other cultural barriers to overcome as well. They have to learn, understand, and apply the underlying

principles of democratic processes to run a community-based organization.

The group dynamics of the organizational members are related to leadership and decision-making issues. As mentioned earlier, we have to look at the social relations of organizational members in order to understand organizational behavior. The difference in how each culture defines social relation is at the root of the marked contrast between democratic and autocratic styles. In this case, while the Cambodian culture emphasizes hierarchy (stress differences), the American culture stresses equality (minimizes differences). The contrasting cultural assumptions affected all social interactions in the organization. Here again, we have shown many instances where the restructuring of social hierarchy caused conflicts and friction among members. Group tensions were manifested in how members conducted meetings, communicated with each other, and resolved conflicts. Consequently, interpersonal and group issues requiring democratic style and procedure often conflict with the traditional convention of social hierarchy.

Another related and important issue is conflict resolution. Though in most organizations, conflict is difficult to resolve, in MAAs, its resolution is perhaps one of the most difficult areas in their cross-cultural adaptation. In the SK case, the difference between the traditional style of conflict avoidance and the dominant

norm of confrontation posed a dilemma in conflict resolution. But, in exploring this area in great length, we discovered how conflicting elements of disparate cultures are synthesized. Undoubtedly, conflict resolution was an arduous and unpleasant experience for the MAA as illustrated by the critical incidents. Yet, at the same time, it provided a remarkable example of the organization's capacity to synthesize two divergent cultural elements.

Other organizational structures and processes are also affected by the adaptation processes. We have illustrated in the SK case how these new structures and processes are interpreted by members becoming familiar with them. These interpretations, however, involve the members' new cultural learnings. As Brislin (1981) asserts learning the new culture requires changes and development of an individual's cognition, dynamic tendencies, and performance. For example, learning the role of board member or executive director requires these individuals to understand the appropriate cultural behavior for their roles and then decide whether or not to conform. The decisions to accept or reject depends on where the individual is with his or her own degree of acculturation and to what extent the person wants to disrupt the traditional conventions. The individual has two choices. One is to learn and use appropriate behavior as defined by the dominant culture, a mode more frequently used by SK members. The other is to create alternative ways of behaving which become acceptable

to the dominant culture. This study has repeatedly illustrated how the processes of cross-cultural adaptation impact organizational issues.

In summary, several significant findings can be identified. There is a need to underscore the importance of the interrelated concepts of culture and acculturation. The process of acculturation for MAAs implies cross-cultural change and transition occurring at individual, group, and organizational levels. As newcomer ethnic organizations, MAAs confront conflicting elements of ethnocentric traditions and dominant norms. Consequently, they experience processes of cross-cultural adaptation in the forms of creating, rejecting, blending, and synthesizing cultural elements. These coping and adaptive mechanisms influence their structure and processes. It is critical to recognize that MAAs are cross-culturally embedded in the larger context of their sociocultural environment. Finally, it is important to draw implications from this study for future research, practice, and policy.

Implications for Research, Practice, and Policy

Up to this point, we have reviewed a number of cross-cultural issues encountered by newcomer ethnic organizations in their growth and development. We believe these findings have significant implications for the field of organizational studies. However, if this study is to have

practical applications, we also need to suggest how we might use it to foster growth and improve conditions for MAAs. It seems clear there are several implications for researchers, practitioners (including MAAs), and policymakers.

Research and Theory

Further exploration of the organizational dynamics of newcomer ethnic organizations or MAAs per se is sorely needed. Minimal attention has been given to these organizations as a focus of study. As mentioned in the literature, they are embedded in a larger study of refugee resettlement. Very few studies are available that even address their organizational behavior and development. This study has addressed only one dimension of the unique characteristics of newcomer ethnic organizations. It is also exploratory and limited to one case study.

There is a need for more observation, documentation, and study of cross-cultural adaptation of organizations before we can develop constructs and theories of this social phenomenon. For example, the conceptual framework presented earlier (Chapter 6) warrants further exploration and refinement. Each cross-cultural element such as organizational acculturation, intercultural conflicts, and sociocultural systems could be a focus of investigation. Similarly, the issues of conflict resolution, leadership,

communication, and group dynamics in the context of cross-cultural adaptation are important topics to pursue.

The applicability of the study to other newcomer ethnic organizations suggests many research possibilities. For example, comparative studies of MAAs would illuminate some of the following questions: What are the differences in adaptation patterns between western-type (Russian, Polish, Irish newcomers) and non-western (Haitian, El Salvadorean, Hmong newcomers) MAAs? Are there differences between MAAs in early development and those in later development? Do MAAs go through phases of cross-cultural adaptation which correspond to their stages of organizational development? What is the dynamics of MAAs with multicultural board and staff? Do other interethnic issues and conflicts emerge in these organizations? What patterns of cross-cultural adaptation are common to MAAs? These are just a few topics of inquiry which would further our understanding of newcomer ethnic organizations.

Practice and Intervention

It is increasingly obvious that practitioners who are working with or in MAAs need to be sensitive to the cultural values, beliefs, customs, and ideologies of newcomer groups. Therefore, central to working with and in these organizations is the incorporation of culturally relevant and appropriate practices and interventions. To accomplish

this requires an ethnocultural approach, that is, acknowledging, valuing, and utilizing the cultural traditions unique to the ethnic group. Thus, it is imperative to recognize and accept cultural traditions and practices of MAAs and their ethnic communities. The complexity of issues and problems faced by newcomer groups can only compound the challenges faced by practitioners. But, at the same time, this provides opportunities to create new and innovative strategies and programs for meaningful change.

For organizational consultants, the question is: how can they assist newcomer ethnic organizations in cross-cultural adaptation while giving them control over the direction of cultural change? The current practices of organizational interventions have a western orientation (Hofstede, 1980). But, as this study shows, it is essential to view and analyze these organizations in a social, cultural, and political context. Thus, consultants need to examine their own philosophical orientation in addressing the sociocultural needs of MAAs in order to help them to be successful without compromising their ethnic identity.

However, innovative interventions for organizational adaptation that incorporates the cross-cultural elements unique to newcomer ethnic organizations need to be developed. If client-centered interventions are to be employed, consultants must adopt the MAAs' perspectives and see things from their worldview. This means they must be

aware of intercultural conflicts encountered by these organization and understand their sociocultural system. Perhaps, if consultants become more sensitive and aware of the special needs of MAAs, they may learn to distinguish between the problems due to cross-cultural conflicts, those due to basic organizational issues, or those that are intersections of both.

For the ethnic board and staff members, there is a need to understand that the problems encountered by MAAs are, in part, a result of their cross-cultural adaptation as bicultural organizations. What MAAs experience - including conflicts and tension - is inherent in the process of acculturation. But members need to learn that this process is also one of cultural enrichment and creativity, an opportunity for them to learn, experience, and participate in their new sociocultural environment. Moreover, ethnic members need not blame each other or themselves for organizational issues that clearly are the result of cross-cultural adaptation. Rather, if they recognize this, they will be better able to address and resolve them. If MAAs and their ethnic members work together, with or without outside help, they will slowly learn self-governance, adjust to new roles, cope with cross-cultural conflicts, adapt to differing values and norms, and manage the changing cultural dynamics of their community.

Finally, from this researcher's own experience, developing cultural awareness and knowledge is not enough; a

bicultural, and often bilingual background, is crucial if work with these organizations is to be effective. However, although bicultural or multicultural practitioners are definitely an asset, they are not a substitute for cultural "insiders" from within the ethnic community. Therefore, there is an urgent need to encourage indigenous leaders to become organizers, practitioners, and organizational consultants. Only they can best address the specific issues of their own ethnic organization and community.

Policy and Funding

This exploratory study, while not intended for policy makers, has useful implications for the area of refugee and immigrant resettlement. The findings suggest directions government and local agencies should consider in developing and providing support for MAAs. It does so largely by documenting the complexity of cross-cultural issues encountered by MAAs, suggesting the importance of culturally appropriate interventions, and asserting the occurrence of organizational acculturation. The research outcomes should be considered in the development and implementation of policies and programs relevant to MAAs. For example, addressing organizational acculturation and employing cross-cultural strategies ought to be integrated in organizational development projects for MAAs.

MAAs are generally marginalized within the non-profit world because they do not receive serious attention and support from the government and philanthropic sectors. Government support for MAAs, mostly from refugee-oriented funding, has dwindled over the years. The policy for MAAs, just like the resettlement policy for immigrants and refugees, is to mainstream them quickly into being service providers. While government has allocated the initial funding for MAAs, private foundations have given insufficient assistance. Both, however, recognize the significant role MAAs play in their newcomer communities but are slow in responding to their special needs.

Although seeking funds from within their ethnic community is being done, MAAs usually use these funds to support cultural events and festivities. Given the short history and marginality of newcomer communities, achieving self-sufficiency for MAAs through the generous support of their own community is unrealistic and implausible. The viability of MAAs largely depends on the support of the government and philantrophic sectors. Without this support, MAAs in their current form and with their specific purpose would cease to exist. As MAAs respond to the changing needs of their community, so will they need to diversify their funding base, thereby undergoing a transformation into perhaps another type of organization.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates how a newcomer ethnic organization can have the resiliency and capacity to

adapt to a new environment while retaining a sense of cultural identity. This may involve accepting aspects of the new culture, but it can also include strengthening traits of the old culture. Whether our interest in newcomer ethnic organizations is as researchers, practitioners, or policymakers, we have to carefully examine our philosophical and ideological approaches in assisting these organizations in the process of cultural change. Those who perceive themselves as "experts" in helping these MAAs assimilate into the mainstream, although well-intended, may not be fully informed or sensitive to many of the more complex cross-cultural dimension of these organizations. Those who see their role as that of facilitator, empowering indigenous members to make choices for the direction of the organization, can help MAAs retain their unique role and identity.

In the final analysis, the aim for all of us who are interested in helping newcomer ethnic organizations should be to provide the opportunity for these organizations to gain a foothold in the non-profit world, and eventually to become equal and active participants in the cultural landscape of our society. The opportunity exists if reasonable effort is made to provide culturally appropriate resources and technology relevant to their needs. It will take, however, a combined effort for everyone concerned to foster a sociocultural environment in which MAAs can develop

in their own image and on their own terms without sacrificing the freedom to choose their destiny.

APPENDIX

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Personal History

1. What was your life like in Cambodia?
   *parental/family background
   *social status
   *type of residence (rural/urban)
   *education and professional experience

2. How about your life in the refugee camps?
   *camp location
   *length of stay
   *family situation/relatives
   *daily life
   *status or role in camp organization
   *western contacts

3. How did you come to the U.S. and settled in "NV"?
   *family situation
   *migration patterns
   *education/skill training/professional experience

4. How is your life in the U.S.?
   *likes versus dislikes
   *changes of attitudes
   *differing perceptions & values
   *cross-cultural conflicts

Community and Social Organization

5. What do you think about the lives of Cambodians in your community?
   *status of community members
   *membership identity
   *characteristics of Cambodian community
   *informal social groups addressing community needs
   *other groups/organizations meeting commuity needs
   i.e. western churches, resettlement agencies, family sponsors

Organization and Board/Staff Roles

6. Do you think it is important to have a MAA? Why is it important or why is it not important?
   *perceived commuity needs
   *concept of self-help association
   *similar structures in Cambodian culture
   *past experiences affiliated in similar structure

7. Why are you involved as a staff or board member?
   *perceived self-interest
   *motivation
   *perceived role & status
   *similar role/status in Cambodia, camp, & U.S.

8. How well did the organization perform this past years? meeting community needs? future needs of the organization?
   *assessment of organization
   *perceived need for growth & development

Organizational Issues

9. What do you think are the accomplishments of the organization? of the board? of the exec. director?
   *meeting community needs
   *decision-making
   *leadership
   *communication

10. What are some of the issues on the board? between the staff and the board?
   *group interaction
   *social relations
   *leadership
   *communication

11. Explain your position on the issues you mentioned.
   *values, beliefs, & attitudes
   *changes from traditional culture
   *accepted new behavior

Cross-Cultural Issues

12. What were the major incidents facing the organization since it started?
   *critical incidents, social dramas

13. Using criticial incidents or social dramas identified, ask questions on the following issues:

   *social relationship
   *leadership
   *group interaction, group norm
   *practices & habits
   *time element

14. Other probing questions:
    * Were the particular issues related to the incident(s) handled the Cambodian way, or the American way?
    * Did you agree on how they were dealt with?
    * Why do you agree or disagree? If you disagree, how could these issues been addressed differently?

Ethnic Identity

15. What is the role of SK in preserving the Cambodian culture?
    *identity maintenance
    *ethnic dilemma

16. Do you think having an all Cambodian board and staff is important for the organization?
    *ethnic symbols for the organization

17. How can the board function and manage SK in two cultures and maintain a distinct Cambodian identity?
    *process of cultural negotiation
    *bicultural issues

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* Each question contains probing issues which were addressed in a culturally appropriate manner and in a language understood by informants. All interviews were conducted as informal conversations.

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